

THE
SAINT PAULS MAGAZINE.

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MR. CARINGTON.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVISER.

"Raphael
The affable Archangel."—MILTON.

"Ne'er has ivory neck or shoulder
So enchanted the beholder,
When perchance the parted robe
Half betrays each rising globe,
As the ivory cubes that lie
Paired beneath the punter's eye."—LUTTREL.

LETTERS. The penny post has destroyed the letter-writing art.
Never now does any man scribble such stuff as this :—

"Si potes Archiacis conviva recumbere lectis
Nec modica coenare times olus omne patella,
Supremo te sole domi, Torquate, manebo."

Or this . . . "Heus tu, promittas ad coenam, nec venis ! Dicetur ius :
ad assem impendiam reddes, nec id modicum. Paratae erant
lactueae singulae, cochleae ternae, ova bina"—not forgetting lyrists
and ladies of Gades to dance. No : the letter that was an epigram
was killed by Rowland Hill (the greatest malefactor to the human
race since Cadmus) and now the post brings nothing save bills,
circulars, begging letters, applications from orphans whose relations
want to stow them away into asylums and forget their existence.
Among my intimate friends are three of the five Englishmen who
can write English . . . but you should see their letters ! They are
the most slovenly productions imaginable.

I like a good letter ; and, as the elder Disraeli said, "a she-corre-
spondent for me, always provided she doesn't cross." A girl who

crosses her letters ought to be whipt and sent to bed. Our friend Frank Noel got a letter this day from a she-correspondent who declined to decessate. It was not his only epistle. The postman belated by the depths of snow, reached Delamere some hours later than his usual time, and brought Frank Noel three letters. The Prince had by this time retired to his own apartment, where a heap of momentous-looking despatches followed him. Frank imagined him opening these portentous documents with an air of superb importance. Frank did not however, know that the Prince seldom opened a letter without shuddering—afraid it might contain a menace from the Silent Sisters.

Canon Lovelace wrote his nephew a pleasant gossiping letter from Sarum Close, full of the easy gaiety of an elderly ecclesiast who has not dropt altogether the pleasures of the world. The Canon could grow a peach, could devil a turkey's legs, could make an epigram. The Canon wrote to his nephew in a pleasant affectionate garrulous way—the style of Horace Walpole, Mrs. Harris, Emily Eden. The sort of letter one means is made of "trifles light as air" or lighter; is a mere soap-bubble, blown from the flimsy gossip of a country town, but radiant and coruscant with the sunshine of a poetic wit.

The Canon's was the letter Frank read first. Then he took up another, and regarded its rough-papered envelope with something like awe. The address was written in the most reckless hand with the blackest ink. There was a seal—a courtesy too often omitted in these days of disestablishment and of envelopes that you must lick to make them stick. Indeed I am glad to say that all three of Frank's letters were sealed.

"This is the Adviser," thought Frank, regarding curiously the strong black letter, regarding also the crest on the seal, a buck at gaze, with the motto *Tout bien ou Rien*. Opening the letter he found that it began . . . "My dear Frank." He looked to the end: it was signed, "Frank Carington."

"Can this be the Adviser?" thought Frank Noel. "Surely not. Such coincidences are impossible."

Now and then Frank had a note from his godfather, but the graceless rascal was somewhat irregular in reply. Mr. Carington's handwriting had ceased to be familiar to him, so rare of late had been their intercourse. This letter was brief and characteristic.

"I am amused, amazed, pleased, that you are at Delamere. I have heard it from a lady whose mother I vainly loved, and whom for her mother's and her own sake I desire to see in the place that belongs to her. Stay awhile at Delamere: be secret: tell me who is there: write daily. This may seem mysterious, and perhaps even frivolous: but you are a boy and must obey your godfather's

commands. Describe to me everybody at Delamere, male and female, and tell me all that goes on.

"FRANK CARINGTON."

Frank Noel uttered an ejaculation, anathematizing the whole generation of godfathers. However he sent to Rupert Court in Berkshire, whence Mr. Carington dated, a brief sketch of the situation, inserting pen and ink presentments (he was good at caricature) of himself on Malachi, Elinor on Merlin, the Earl, the Prince, Lucy Walter as a waitress!

The letter that was kept to the last as a pretty little sweetmeat, too sweet to be swallowed greedily, was in the daintiest of envelopes, sealed with nothing save the letter E. Frank, in lazy pleasant mood, turned it over several times before he opened it. Then he found nothing sentimental or lachrymose or erotic, but a letter that ran thus:—

"No one is wiser than my Adviser: and I'm glad to be told he knows you of old and thinks you almost as good as gold. This being so I venture to say that I think it was a fortunate day when you came wandering down this way. I am half in love with you; and I half hate you, because I know you'll laugh at this poor trash with which I bore you out of idleness . . . nothing more.

"E."

How many times Frank Noel, nighed in an oriel of the Great Hall, read this silly little letter over and over, it would be hard to say. He thought it so clever. He was more than half in love with its writer. What a delight it is when a fresh fair fearless child talks or writes with this innocent freedom! Such a style, such ease, such pretty audacity, are quite unknown to the naughty girls born into the world to do evil. Professedly prudish, demurely devilish, voluble *volucrae*, they allure, bridle, coax, deceive, entice, flirt, giggle, hug, insinuate, juggle, kneel, laugh, mutter, nod, osculate, prink, quiz, rattle, sing, tattle, unbutton, vilify, wink, xystize, yearn, zanify. This hasty alphabet does not exhaust a tithe of the verbs that may be applied to a certain class of women. Happily there are some women born ladies: no man who knows the world can mistake such an one when fortunate enough to meet her. According to the *Talmud* the naughty girls are children of Adam's first wife, Lilith: only the nice girls are daughters of Eve. Certes, between them is a chasm impassable.

Frank Noel, foolish boy, kissed this little letter of Elinor's. Then he thought of how he would answer it. Here arose a difficulty. The child had no surname. Her letter had no date. The post-mark was simply *Carlisle*. He had not the remotest idea of the name of the

cottage. He thought over the subject at some length ; suddenly he ejaculated :—

“I’ll write her a letter and take it myself. Perhaps she’ll be glad to see me again. Perhaps she won’t.”

His letter ran thus :—

“E which begins Eternity
And puts an end to Time,
Has this absurd effect on me—
It makes me rhyme.

“Your rare Adviser well I know—
A man of noble rank ;
About a hundred years ago
He called me Frank.

“I mean to traverse leagues of snow
Your fair white hand to clutch.
You say you’re half in love : I know
I’m twice as much.

“Five vowels were walloped into me :
How little then I knew
That I should be in love with E,
And also U.”

Having written this rubbish, and read it over a score times, and wondered what Elinor would say to it, the impetuous boy, saying no word to anybody, got O’Hara to saddle Malachi, whistled for Rory and Eileen, and rode off toward the cottage to deliver it. The day was charming. The snow was over ; frost continued ; clear cobalt-blue was the sky ; keen the air, but windless. Malachi cantered, and the greyhounds caracoled. Frank felt, what we all are now and then fortunate enough to feel, a perfect joyousness. A friend of mine used to say that when he thus felt he knew some misfortune was about to happen. Such has not been my experience, but it certainly was, on this occasion, Frank’s. When he reached the quaint old cottage, no creature was visible. He knocked, and the greyhounds barked, but not a sign of life appeared. The chimneys were smokeless, the house was deserted ; no movement was anywhere apparent—Elinor was gone.

Astounded and perplexed beyond measure, Frank Noel, after proving to himself that the cottage was utterly deserted, plodded wearily back toward Delamere, wondering what could have happened. Happily, both for himself and for others, Frank had a sanguine temperament. He believed thoroughly in his own destiny, and never would accept the permanence of misfortune.

“Ill-luck to-day means glorious luck to-morrow,” he was wont to say. “Ill-luck for a year means splendid luck for a century.”

Frank was incurably hopeful—or rather faithful. It was dull work riding back to Delamere through the snowdrifts without having seen Elinor, without knowing whither she had vanished, yet very certain he felt that he should soon see her again.

At the same time, as he made his way through the snow, he turned over and over in his mind the problem of Elinor's disappearance, wondering what it meant. Either she had left of her own accord, or through some sudden summons. The former theory seemed untenable. Here was her letter, written yesterday, and he let the reins drop on Malachi's neck as he read it over and over again. A pretty little nonsensical rhyming notelet, not without a touch of earnest under the jest, which could by no means have been written if at the time she had intended to leave her home. The only alternative supposition was that she had been suddenly called away on some matter of life and death. Even so, was it likely she would take with her the old people of the cottage, who had probably never been twenty miles from home in their lives? The more Frank Noel pondered the matter, the more perplexed he grew; and the only thing on which, at the moment, he could decide was to write another letter to Carington, telling him what had happened, and asking his immediate advice. He could think of nothing better.

Entering the Great Hall, which was pleasantly warm after his journey through the snow, he found luncheon laid near the great fireplace, and Lucy Walter ready to entertain him. Boys are boys: Frank was glad to be welcomed by her pretty piquant face, though puzzled by the mysterious vanishment of Elinor.

"How fond you are of going out in the snow, Mr. Noel," she exclaimed, tripping across the vast room to meet him. "Now I don't like the cold, and you can't fancy what a number of blankets I sleep under, this weather. And Lord Delamere doesn't like cold weather a bit. Sometimes when there is snow he won't leave his room all day."

"Why in the world does he live up among these snowy mountains?" asked Frank, sitting down before a cover which when lifted betrayed some delectable devil. "If I were Lord Delamere and hated cold weather I'd buy a Greek island or an Italian city. But I like cold weather: it enables one to enjoy rump steak and London stout and port wine. In a hot climate you must eat fruit and drink claret."

"What odd things you say!" exclaimed Lucy. "But you are not drinking anything. If you won't have claret, what *will* you have?"

"O, the Delamere ale—a horn of it. Old English ale is the best of all drinks for an Englishman—and this is one of the few places where it is to be found."

Frank was soon supplied with a horn of that noble beverage, which destroys weak brains altogether, but only produces in the strong brain a murmurous music as of summer's first swarm of bees.

"How are the Earl and the Prince, Lucy?" he presently asked. "Shall I see them at dinner?"

"I don't know *how* they are," she said, "except that they seem to have a great deal of business together—and I am not wanted—and I am very glad of it."

"Why, child?"

"O, I don't like the Prince," she answered with a shudder. "I wish I was sure never to see him again."

"He isn't nice," quoth Frank, sagaciously scratching his head to stimulate his ideas. "Few Russians are."

"How do you know? Have you seen many?"

"Well," said Frank Noel, on this occasion scratching the opposite hemisphere in perplexity, "I think he's the only one I ever saw."

Lucy Walter broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"Nice fellow you are, Mr. Noel," she said, "to run down all the Russians when you have only seen one. Do you know the population of Russia, sir?"

"I should be very much ashamed of myself and my instructors if I did. All I know about Russia is, that it has a Czar and a great bell and produces caviar."

"Ah," she said almost gravely, though gravity was not Miss Lucy's strong point, "it produces stronger things than caviar. But will you have some? Here is a bottle the Prince brought from Saint-Petersburg."

When luncheon was over Frank wanted to go to his room and write his letter number two, to Carington, but Lucy hovered about him, and chatted, and challenged him to billiards, and filled up some hours of the afternoon. It was a holiday for Lucy when her fidgety master was not perpetually in want of her, and it was quite a *bonne bouche* on such a holiday occasion to have a young fellow of Frank Noel's type with whom to flirt a little. Frank did not acquit himself in this gay tourney so well as he might, if Elinor's disappearance had not perpetually worried him: and Lucy, a good judge, seeing that he was not by nature stupid, decided that he was preoccupied.

The Earl required his secretary at last, and Frank thereupon went to his apartment and wrote to Carington a second letter, stating what had occurred. There was a natural tone of anxiety in it. Frank, sanguine as he was, could not shake off the notion that there was something very strange in Elinor's so suddenly vanishing—specially, as his godfather's letter suggested an enigma.

CHAPTER X.

RUPERT COURT.

Alie. A house of statesmen, soldiers, scholars, poets,
Since they first bred.

Raphael. Ay, and of lovers, darling ;
The man will never help the state, nor lead
Armies to victory, nor teach the world
With scholar's mastery or poet's fire,
Unless he has loved.

Alie. And won ?

Raphael. Or lost, mayhap.

The Comedy of Dreams.

RUPERT COURT, Berkshire, had no snow around it, on the morning when Mr. Carington received two letters from his godson. Though winter had fallen heavily upon Lakeland, it was soft and pleasant weather in the valley of the Thames. The quaint old Elizabethan house, a hypæthral tetragon, had plenty of sunshine on the white marble-framed glass of its numerous bays and oriel. In one of the warmest and most southern of these embayed curves, which looked across a green lawn to a lovely river-reach, Mr. Carington sat at breakfast with his friend Rupert Fitz-Rupert.

As "not to know him argues thyself unknown" it were vain to describe the Fitz-Rupert at any length ; his people came in with the Conqueror, have been fighting ever since, one way and another, have refused peerages, won't be popular, won't oppress working men, won't be gushingly loyal or madly democratic, won't in fact be anything but Fitz-Ruperts. Stalwart folk for generations ; scholarly folk also, though in a rough and careless way ; ready for any fortune or misfortune ; generous and despotic ; fond lovers and fierce haters ; men equally free to act tragedy or comedy in the world. The present Rupert Fitz-Rupert is a young fellow of twenty-five. Mr. Carington and his father were fast friends. Mr. Carington wants to see him married and settled. The stalwart stallion kicks at the thought of double harness.

"You must do it, you know, Rupert," says Mr. Carington. "It is absolutely necessary there should be an heir to such a fine estate. Come : although I'm past the marrying age, I carry the memories of nice girls about with me. What do you think of Mary Hedlow ?"

"Why, her father's a railway contractor. Hang it !"

"A railway contractor's daughter need not carry any metals in her pocket except gold," says Carington.

"O, I should have to take her in shares. Who's the next ?"

"What do you think of Lady Gwendoline Saint Lythian."

"I think the old Duke's an unimaginable bore, and the girl hasn't

a notion beyond decorating churches and taking tracts to old women. No, Carington, I want none of these. I want a lady of the true type, devoid of eccentricity, of prejudice, of frivolity . . . but with plenty of courage and wisdom and wit. That supreme flower of the world does not seem to pay for cultivation now-a-days."

"I know just the girl: but from what I have lately heard I fear you are too late. So I won't tantalize you by describing her charms."

At this point the post-bag was brought in from Marlow, and letters and papers interrupted the conversation. Mr. Carington read Frank Noel's communications carefully through at least three times. Then he lighted a cigarette, an invariable accessory to the breakfast table at Rupert Court.

"Do you know Prince Oistravieff?" he said presently to his friend, when that gentleman had got over his correspondence.

"Oistravieff? O yes! met him in Paris. Madly in love with Mademoiselle Cerise Jambon of the *Théâtre Diablerie*. Don't you recollect? Somebody horsewhipped him and was found in the Morgue next day."

"Ah. I do not remember that incident, but I know he has been mixed up with two or three queer doings. Some secret society is pledged to have his life: that's why he lives in England, the only country where there are any police. I suppose he's a scoundrel."

"The supposition is mild. I dare say you know more about him than I, but from what I have heard he ought to have been hanged long ago. But why are you talking about him just now? You look serious. What's up?"

Mr. Carington smiled, yet gravely—

"It is just this," he said. "The very girl I was talking to you about when the letters came in has suddenly disappeared. She was in a lonely cottage in Cumberland, and this Russian rascal is in the neighbourhood. There is nothing to connect her disappearance with him: indeed I think somebody else has more to do with it probably: but I had a letter from her two days ago, and she said nothing about leaving. She is in a curious position, poor child, and I am trying to put her in the place which is hers by right. I will tell you all about it some day."

Rupert Fitz-Rupert rang the bell.

"William," to the footman, "the omnibus for Maidenhead." The man went off. "Let's go north at once," said Fitz-Rupert to Mr. Carington—"travelling bag is luggage enough—Don't waste time—There's a train at twelve."

"What the devil do you mean to do when you get there?"

"O, that's simple enough—Take this Russian villain by the neck and horsewhip him till he tells us where the girl is."

"We have no proof he has anything to do with her disappearance."

"Proof! Isn't he a Russian and a Prince? By Jove, Carington,

your logic is Watts's or Whately's. Come, look alive: I'm off, and mean you to go with me."

Mr. Carington, who knew by experience his youthful friend's impetuosity, gave way; not uninfluenced by the anxiety which grew upon him as he thought over Frank Noel's information. What could so suddenly have caused Elinor to leave her retreat? Why should the old people she was living with have also disappeared? It occurred to him that perhaps, apprehending some peril or annoyance, she had suddenly determined to come in search of him: this he suggested to Fitz-Rupert.

"It may be so," replied that impetuous youth; "but she would not take the old cottagers with her, surely. However, my people shall have full instructions to make her comfortable when she arrives here, and to telegraph to me if she does come. Better telegraph to the County Hotel at Carlisle, perhaps, and give orders there for sending it on. By the way, what's the lady's name?"

"Elinor."

"Ah, but her family name?"

"She does not use one at present. Her right to her true name is ignored, so she goes nameless till she has proved that right."

"Romantic," quoth Rupert; "but I'd do the same if the case were mine. By Jove, I'm in love with her already."

"That won't do," said Mr. Carington. "I shall have two young fellows fighting for one damsel."

"O, I'll fight. There's the trap. I shall take my man Tom, and I've told him to see your things put in. He'll wait on you as well as your own man, and he'd be useful in a row."

The omnibus came crunching the gravel round to the front door, drawn by two fine dark browns. Off they went, and were lucky enough to catch a pretty fast train to Paddington.

Rupert telegraphed for a carriage and pair to be ready at the terminus to take them to Euston. So by good hap they arrived there in time for a quick train northward. A handsome tip to a guard secured a through carriage, reserved to themselves and Tom Itley, for Rupert, when his travelling companions did not object, liked to have his body-servant with him. Tom was a wiry fellow from Kingston Lisle, famous in his youth as a backsword player and wrestler and rough-rider; but the handiest and quietest of servitors. He took the tickets, tipped the guard, arranged rugs in the carriage, lighted a travelling lamp (for London was in fog), bought newspapers, obtained foot-warmers, set opposite his master a large Russia-leather despatch box (so it seemed) which, when presently opened, was found to contain liqueurs and sandwiches, and cold game and cigars.

There was fog at Euston, unconquerable by all the flaring lamps of

the terminus. There was snow on the roofs of the carriages of a train just arrived ; the air grew very damp and chill. Mr. Carington, wrapt in a vast cloak of sables, threw himself with some disgust into his corner, exclaiming :

"What a pleasant journey we shall have, Rupert !"

"Bitter irony !" said the indomitable youth. "Why, the feverish delight of coming adventure makes a man warm. Are you not Quixote, with me for a Sancho, rushing a few hundred miles through fog and snow to rescue a damsel in distress ? I only wish the precious old train could be forced faster northward."

A wish unlikely to be gratified ; for as they began to leave the city fog, and to see clearer by Harrow's classic hill, sacred to memories of Byron, Peel, Palmerston, it became evident that the snow was coming swiftly southward. A keen north blast was driving it upon them, while the freezing rails grew so slippery that the engine-wheels could not bite. Mr. Carington groaned.

"Open the despatch-box, Tom Ifley," said Rupert.

Tom obeyed. The appearance of a cold grouse on a silver dish, and several stoppered bottles wherein liquids of various colours danced and sparkled—some brown, some green, some ruby red, some white with specks of gold in them—tended to cheer Mr. Carington.

"Take the back and legs of a grouse and a glass or two of absinthe," said Rupert. "Absinthe's a bad thing for regular use, but nothing touches it when your body is numbed and your brain worried. Then we'll smoke, and, if possible, sleep—sure to sleep with all this snow."

Mr. Carington followed Fitz's advice, and began to feel less disgusted with his situation. Rupert himself made a hearty luncheon, and then wrapped himself up in company with a cigar. "Sleep is a cloak," said Aristophanes first, and Cervantes after.

"Have something to eat and drink, Tom," said Rupert lazily to his henchman ; "and wake me if there's an accident."

"If it's fatal, he may have to disobey you for the first time," said Mr. Carington.

The travellers slept. Slowly did the train fight the elements, painfully baffling snow with steam. Sometimes the stoppage at a station awoke our friends, but they solaced themselves with some slight refection, and drowsed again without much colloquy. At Lancaster, however, there was an unusually long stoppage, for by this time the snowdrifts were tremendous through the Lune valley. Tom Ifley got out to reconnoitre, and found that it was a question whether the train could go on. Luckily there was a spare engine at the station. With its help the train pushed forward, and met with no mishaps, and reached Carlisle hours after time. It was past midnight, anyway, but the great refreshment rooms and the County Hotel were a blaze of light, and looked cheerful to the tired travellers.

Tom Ifley had been here before with his master, going to the moors. He knew the resourceful waiters and the prompt habits of the house. He ordered rooms . . . and supper. Mr. Carington, by the time he had unfrozen himself, was agreeably surprised to see grouse soup steaming on the table, and a decanter of excellent Madeira.

"Why," he said, "it is worth while to be frozen for a few hours to be thawed like this."

"You are regaining your spirits," quoth Rupert. "I wonder what's to follow. I've been eating and sleeping all day, yet I'm hungry and sleepy still."

"Well, I am thirsty," said Mr. Carington, "after that absinthe, a liquor I have not touched for twenty years. Waiter, some champagne with the cutlets."

"It is two, I see," said Rupert. "What time shall we start to-morrow?"

"Ten or thereabout," said Mr. Carington. "We shall want four horses,—it is a bad road, even when there is no snow."

"Tom will look to all that, but where shall you go first?"

"I shall have the carriage for Langton Delamere: but Hyslope, where Elinor ought to be, is on a bye road on the way thither; we'll try that first."

It was nearer eleven than ten by the time breakfast was finished next morning, and the horses were ready. The snow made travelling noiseless over the stony streets of the city famed for many great men, from King Arthur to Washington Wilks. The snow, moreover, made the town look clean . . . a novelty most agreeable.

The post-chaise journey, though slow and difficult, was pleasanter than that by rail. The air, though keen, was dry; there was no wind; the crisp snow was growing to be like a crystal pavement. The postilions with some difficulty discovered Hyslope cottage; when they pulled up, Tom Ifley was off the box in an instant, and opened the carriage door.

The cottage was no longer deserted, as Frank had described it. The front door stood open; there was smoke from the kitchen chimney. They advanced, and found the cottager and his wife in the kitchen, eating a frugal dinner. The problem of getting an idea into the skull of the Cumbrian peasant was curiously complicated by their deafness; luckily, when some time had been wasted upon them, in walked Frank Noel, heartily welcomed by Mr. Carington. Rupert was ready to quarrel with him at once.

"What news?" said Mr. Carington.

"None: the cottage was shut up, as I found on returning next day, because the two old people feared Elinor was lost, and had gone out separate ways in search of her. Of course I went to work at once, and sent all the Langton villagers out in various directions; but remembering your mysterious letter, I said nothing to Lord Delamere,

or any one else at the Hall. I have been to Carlisle, and got the county police to search, and I have ridden Lord Delamere's cob nearly to death. But there is no trace of Elinor, and the people about here know the fells so well that I feel certain she would have been traced if anything had happened to her in the snow."

"So you are hopeful, still," said Mr. Carington.

"Hopeful," he said, "but most perplexed and anxious. What *can* we do next?"

"That confounded Prince is at the bottom of it," exclaimed Fitz-Rupert, fiercely. "Let's go up to the Hall and squeeze his secret out of him."

"The Prince! What, Oistravieff?" exclaimed Frank Noel.

"The Prince is a great villain," said Mr. Carington; "but I do not quite see how he can be concerned in this."

"He is, I'll swear," cried Rupert.

"Well, I shall drive on to Delamere and see the Earl. I don't suppose he will care to meet his old friend, but he cannot refuse me. Is there any servant at the Hall that you think trustworthy, Frank?"

"There is the chief groom, Stephen O'Hara, a little Irishman whose face I like. He is a Fenian, and writes the most delightfully rebellious poetry, but he's a good groom, and will stick to his place till they get a Parliament at Dublin, and choose him member for Galway."

"Ah, I'll get an opportunity of talking with him, or, better still, Rupert, couldn't your man, Tom, get into conversation with him, and ascertain if he has noticed anything unusual at Delamere these few days?"

"Of course Tom shall take him some absinthe, and declare it is better than whiskey. But how mysterious you are, Carington! what do you suspect?"

"I can form no definite suspicion. I am only making vague conjectures from circumstances known to me, which, at this moment, it would take too long to explain. To-night, perhaps, there may be time to talk farther. *Now*, my first idea is to see Lord Delamere."

As they talked, the carriage reached the Hall. Tom Ifley, who had ridden Malachi, took him round to the stables, acting under his master's instructions. Mr. Carington inquired for the Earl.

"Let you and I," Fitz-Rupert whispered to Frank, "look after that Russian."

Mr. Carington was shown in to Lord Delamere's private apartment. Lucy Walter met the two young men in the Great Hall.

CHAPTER XI.

FACE TO FACE.

The Cardinal. No living man shall dare to censure me
Save the Holy Father, and he censures not.
What I have done, is done.

Raphael. Some things are never
Done twice, by the very saintliest of saints:
Your deed is such. *The Comedy of Dreams.*

MR. CARINGTON had not seen Lord Delamere since the day of Captain Lovelace Noel's death; but there had been between them correspondence on two or three matters . . . on one question especially. Mr. Carington had known the late Earl; had dined with him in the far-famed Great Hall; had, in the very room in which his younger brother now received him, talked of that younger brother's character. All through his brilliant various fortunate life, Mr. Carington had been the cherished adviser of men older than himself, of women younger: and it seemed likely he would play the part to the last.

The Earl rose feebly at his entrance, leaning on an ivory-headed staff. He wore a dressing-gown of arabesque design; his scanty white hair peeped from beneath a black velvet skull-cap; he looked not altogether unlike an aristocratic old magician. Merlin, if he ever escapes from Broceliande, will in all likelihood appear in some such guise. There was lambent rage in the Earl's eyes, there was fierce obstinacy in his mouth, as he said—

"Pray sit down, Mr. Carington. To what do I owe the honour of a visit from you in this inclement weather?"

"Delamere," said Mr. Carington, taking a chair, and speaking very quietly, "when I found you had my godson under your roof, I began to think I had mistaken your character."

"What do you mean, sir?" he interrupted.

"If you can listen patiently while I say what I mean, it may be good for both of us. We have not met since the day that boy was born; we probably shall not meet again; let us be calm, and talk like men of the world."

"You always were so damnably calm, Carington," broke out the Earl, thumping the floor with his staff. "You're ice and I'm fire; you're a vegetable and I'm an animal. But if you really have anything to say more than you have said so many times before in your letters, I'll listen, and have it over. Mind, I am resolute about that girl."

"You will not do your duty by her."

"Duty! I owe her no duty. Her mother was a knave and her father a fool, like his mother: I despised and hated her. I don't want to see the girl, or to hear of her. She will get her rights, if she

has any, in due time ; meanwhile, let her keep out of my way, and leave me to die in peace."

"She might be quite as good a secretary for you as that little minx you employ in that curious capacity," said Carington.

"Why, what the devil have you got to say against Lucy ? She's a good girl, I swear."

"I don't doubt it. And a pretty secretary is an elegant piece of furniture. Still, you know, when Elinor—"

"Damn Elinor ! I wish she was dead !"

"That pious wish may be fulfilled, perhaps. Allow me to mention a few incidents. Poor little Elinor, being without Christmas invitations, thought she would like to come and see, for the first time in her life, this part of the country. I dissuaded her, but she seemed so desirous to do it that I gave way. She came ; rambled about ; finally took lodgings at a farm-cottage, Hyslope. In her wanderings she met Frank Noel—"

"What ? does he know—"

"He knows nothing, except that I am interested in her. In further wandering, *with* Frank Noel—for you know boys and girls will ramble together—"

"Damned young fools !" cried the Earl, viciously. "They wouldn't, if they knew the consequences."

"If they didn't, what would become of the race ?"

"What's the good of prolonging such a race—or your story, either ?"

"Well," said Mr. Carington, "I'll be brief. They, being together, met your charming friend Prince Oistravieff—"

"Ha ! he recognised Noel, and thought the girl was his wife."

"Hard to say what a Russian thinks. If he said so, he probably thought otherwise. Barbarians simulate and dissimulate. However, the next point is—and I hope you will deem what I am about to say of some consequence—I have travelled here from Rupert Court in Berkshire as fast as possible . . . because Elinor is suddenly lost."

"Lost !"

"Yes, lost. In the snow, perhaps. But there are whispers about that either you or that infernal scoundrel Oistravieff—"

"Damn it, Carington, this won't do. He is my friend. He is a man of almost imperial blood. You daren't talk thus to his face."

"Daren't I ? You shall see. Let me finish. Rumour says that either you have made away with Elinor to suit your own purpose, or that this hound Oistravieff has added another to a myriad crimes by causing her to be carried off to some lonely place. It behoves you, the lord of Delamere, the unworthy heir of a great race—"

"Unworthy !" Another stamp of the staff, upsetting an ink-stand—

"Yes, unworthy. I hate to see a man do mean things whose

ancestors have done great things habitually. You may call me out if you like ; I won't fire at you ; live as long as you can to see the harm you have done. You know your clerical business was a stupid mixture of superstition and cant. I went to hear you preach once, and, by heaven, it nearly made me sick. You may be as fierce as you like" (the Earl was foaming with rage), "but just think of Elinor."

"Who cares what becomes of her?"

"I do. You ought, for two reasons. You are lord of all these manors, and ought to order search for a lady who may be lost in the snows. But I mean to have two questions answered."

"Ask them, for God's sake, Carington," said the Earl. "You are too much for me. I know I have done wrong. What can I do now?"

Mr. Carington crossed the room and took the Earl's hand.

"Delamere," he said, "if you feel you have done wrong, I have not another word to say. My questions are simple. Have you any knowledge of Elinor's disappearance?"

"None ; I did not even know she was in the neighbourhood."

"Next : do you think it possible Oistravieff may have anything to do with it?"

"Possible, certainly, but I think improbable. He is unscrupulous enough, but he is also too wary to commit any act of violence in England. You know in what peril he lives."

"The S.S.," said Mr. Carington, with a subacid smile. "I know full well. The worst I wish him is an early interview with them. Meanwhile, I go to seek an interview with him ; but, before I leave you, Delamere, promise that you will reconsider your resolution about Elinor, if she is found again. Why should an innocent girl be punished for her parents' faults?"

"I will try to do her justice, on my honour, Carington. You will stay here awhile, and anyone who is with you. I want to see you again, when I am stronger. I want to know what has happened."

"I will stay," said Mr. Carington, taking leave of his old acquaintance ; but as he passed into the Great Hall he involuntarily recalled the distich :

"The devil fell sick, the devil a monk would be ;
The devil grew well, the devil a monk was he."

What he saw in the Great Hall was a group of three by the mighty wood fire—his two young friends and Lucy Walter. The Prince was away on an expedition to some famous place in the vicinity, and Rupert and Frank were obliged to wait impatiently for Mr. Carington's return, trying the while to enjoy Lucy's badinage. Both young men looked inquiringly at Mr. Carington as he entered : simul-

taneously the Earl's bell rang, and Lucy tripped off with one of her little actress-curtseys.

"The Earl is not in it," said Mr. Carington at once, in a low voice "I have conquered *him*, for the time, at any rate. We shall stay here. Where is Oistravieff? I must see him next."

"We should have seen him before," said Rupert, "but he is away, looking at scenery or something, and we have had no entertainment except that young person."

"I rather liked that young person at first sight," said Frank, "but she does not improve on acquaintance. She is too much like the singing-chambermaid of an old-fashioned comedy. You wonder is she countess or mistress or servitress, or anything else which ends in *ess*."

"If I have time," said Mr. Carington, "I will catechise that damsel. Women are simple-subtle, as Ben Jonson says; but when they are not quite straight, their simplicities are too subtle, and their subtleties too simple. I suspect it will be possible to sink a shaft into her conscience. Meanwhile, seeing that we have travelled, and that I have scolded and argued, let us have lunch. There is a bell near you, Rupert."

Fitz rang, and Mr. Carington gave his orders.

"You seem at home, Carington," said Fitz-Rupert.

"I ought to be, seeing that I am one of the Earl's oldest cronies, though I have not seen him since Frank was born. Besides, it is the old habit of the house. I knew it in the days of the last Earl, Charley's brother. The theory is, live in your own rooms; meet in Hall when you like; order what you like when you like. It is an old Delamere tradition, this attempt to blend in country-house life perfect independence with free society; and the architecture of this house, a vast hall surrounded by suites of rooms, makes the arrangement easy. So I thought we might as well eat and drink to shorten the time before Oistravieff's return."

"I wish I had that Prince here," said Rupert Fitz-Rupert, clenching his fist.

"I have the first right to punish him," said Frank. "I know Elinor, and you don't."

"You must leave me to question him," said Mr. Carington. "If you interfere you will spoil all. If I want him thrashed I'll give you the cue, and you may as well toss up now which is to pitch into the barbarian."

The young men took the cue from Mr. Carington, and luck gave the duty to Rupert Fitz-Rupert. He laughed pleasantly, and said to Frank:

"Now I will surrender my right if you like: for you have seen the lady and I have not."

"No," replied Frank; "I will wait till you are vanquished by

this appalling Russian. He must be a splendid fellow if he thrashes us in detail."

When their meal was served, Lucy Walter re-entered, habited as waitress, first handing Mr. Carington a note from the Earl accompanied by an old vellum scroll. The note was brief:—

"DEAR CARINGTON,

"I grow superstitious. This strange old black letter MS. is a great treasure of ours. Look at it: tell me if you understand the enigma.

"DELAMERE."

Thus ran the old Earl's tremulous hieroglyphics. The dusty piece of vellum was hard reading, and Mr. Carington wisely postponed it till he had tried some oyster-patties which, at this moment, were set before him. While waiting for something to follow he contrived to decipher the mysterious parchment:—

At Eden Hall a cup they show
Which doth betoken direful woe
If to the earth it fall:
Fairies the wondrous goblet tend—
If it be shattered, there will end
The Luck of Eden Hall.

At Delamere a ring is shown—
They say it was a fairy's zone—
The diamond is a tear.
Unless that proud old race should weep,
A lady of their blood must keep
The Luck of Delamere.

As they talked over this curious bit of verse, which seemed rather too modern in its style (so Mr. Carington judged) to be written in black letter, a door of the Great Hall opened, and Prince Oistravieff entered. The gaunt tall figure, wrapt in fur, with a terrifying terrified face, came out nobly in the flickering lights that played over the Hall. His sole attendant was his chaplain and secretary, a young Englishman named Simon Slink, whose history was rather curious. He had entered the English church by the avenue of St. Bees. He became a curate somewhere southward, where an astute Roman Catholic priest had nearly perverted him, when he obtained an introduction to Prince Oistravieff, who wanted a secretary-chaplain. This functionary must be of the Greek church. The Reverend Simon Slink became a member of the Greek church at once. He embraced the opportunity and obtained the situation. The Prince made him his secretary in the true meaning of that word—he kept his secrets.

Simon did not quite like it. He had a sort of half-conscience

somewhere in his composition. He had reached the high ethical level seen in the apophthegm : "Never do harm to another unless it does good to thyself." The man who accepts this saying may possibly, pondering it, find more significance than is at first apparent. CAN a man do good to himself by harming another? I know that thousands of people will tacitly say *yes*, and will consistently act on their opinion.

The tall Prince, the short black chaplain, advanced into the Great Hall; a couple in curious contrast, seeing the one looked a barbaric warrior and the other a slimy Jesuit. In they came together, and the Prince walked towards their table by the fire, and Mr. Carington and his two companions rose.

"Prince Oistravieff, I presume," said Mr. Carington. "My friend, Delamere, told me you were here. Although I have known the most distinguished men in Europe for some years, it is curious that until now I have not had the pleasure of meeting you. My name is Carington. We nearly encountered in Venice in 1850: you left just the day before I arrived, Count Morosino told me."

This was malice aforethought. The Prince had insulted a lady of the Morosino family, and prudently took flight before her brother could reach him. Surely Mr. Carington was cruel to trouble his memory with such a trifle, so many years old. Oistravieff, a dull fellow, though crafty, did not fancy Mr. Carington knew anything. He merely said :

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance to-day. I have long desired to know the most distinguished wit and most brilliant man of fashion in England—therefore in the world. I feel, Mr. Carington, as if I were presented to an emperor."

"Russia regards everything on a grand scale," said Mr. Carington, who, for all that, was not insensible to the insincere eulogy of a fool. "But I am here on a matter of business, Prince Oistravieff, in which you may perhaps help me. Will you kindly give me your attention for a few minutes?"

"With infinite pleasure."

Mr. Carington rose and walked with the Prince across the Great Hall, growing dim already with superfluity of snow outside. Frank Noel and Rupert Fitz-Rupert watched them, like a brace of mastiffs ready to spring. They paced slowly up and down the hall, and spoke in French, and in the lowest tones. The gaunt Prince, wolf in face and sheep at heart, was in strong contrast with the gallant Englishman, who carried his years boyishly, and attacked the rascally Oistravieff with easy promptitude.

"Prince," said Mr. Carington, putting his hand upon his shoulder, "you could do everything you like in Russia, if you dared return thither; but you had better remember that you cannot do all you like in England."

"What do you mean?" he said, angrily. "What have I done in this Republican country of yours?"

"Don't talk loudly, Prince. Either of those two boys is ready to kill you on the spot if you have done what they suspect. I don't say I suspect, because, knowing something of the Silent Sisters, I think you are wise enough to keep quiet in England."

"What do you want, then?"

"You remember the young lady who met you and Mr. Noel at a country inn?"

"Yes. She was beautiful and witty. I thought she was Mrs. Noel. What then?"

"She has been lost for several days. It is thought that you know something about her. Is that so?"

Mr. Carington's keen questioning eyes seemed to see through the Prince's brain. He was angry and perplexed. After a while he said:

"No. It is not my fault that I did not. She is only too beautiful——"

"For fellows like you," interrupted Mr. Carington, scornfully. "Go on."

"Well, it is nothing. I went to see her at her cottage. She was gone. That is all."

"Is it? Tell truth. I know you Russians, Oistravieff. You were made for the knout. You can't tell the whole truth without it; if I gave the word here, you would be tied up and flogged till all the lies were flogged out of you."

"In England! A prince!"

"Pooh! What's a Russian prince? How far is it from prince to serf? Come, let us end this nonsense. Tell me honestly whether you know anything of the young lady I mention."

"Nothing, by all the saints! I wanted to see her again: she was gone. I am distracted at her thus disappearing."

"Well," said Mr. Carington, with tremendous solemnity, "if what you say is true, and if that lady is lost, I shall be sorry for you. She is of the best blood in England. If she is not soon found, you are sure to be examined on the matter, and your least punishment would be to be sent out of England for ever. Most likely you would be imprisoned first for some years."

The Prince, accustomed to Russian despotism, believed all this without much difficulty; and Mr. Carington's judgment, after he thus had frightened him, was that he had made some foolish plan for carrying off Elinor, and that it had failed from the absurdity of its inception.

When he had extorted from the Prince all that the Prince had to say, he allowed that Excellency to retire with his humble follower, and rejoined his two young friends, who were in a state of intense excitement.

"We're not to wring the fellow's neck," cries Fitz.

"He has cheated you, the plausible hound," says Frank.

"You are wrong, boys," replies Mr. Carington. "He *had* some designs——"

There were ejaculations from the two young gentlemen.

"Don't interrupt, says Carington. "If you find he deserves it, horsewhip him. The lesson will do him good. His designs seem to have failed. My little Elinor had disappeared. He knows no more about her than we do."

"It appears to me," cries Fitz the impetuous, "that while you have proved this Russian exactly the villain we all thought him, you have not got any nearer where Elinor is. Think! What may have happened to her! Here are we by a good fire, with plenty of food and wine, while she, poor beautiful child, may have perished in the snow. We have gone to work the wrong way, Carington."

"I fear we have," said Frank; "but then, which was the right? It is enough to drive one mad, this suspense. I thought I had done everything. Yet at intervals there comes the thought of some little thing that might have been of use. My God! it is terrible. I will go out and look for her now."

He rose as he spoke. Rupert rose also, and put his hand on his shoulder, and said,—

"My dear friend, don't let your love for Elinor drive you to useless efforts. She is safe somewhere, I am sure. I am in love with her too, without ever seeing her—a higher claim. We are rivals. Come, let us quarrel till daylight, and then go in search of her."

Frank stood like a statue. His brain was dazed. All at once his eyes brightened: he stepped forward, with arms outstretched: he would have fallen, but for Rupert. What did he see?

A door of the Great Hall had opened: there entered Tom Iffley and Stephen O'Hara and—

ELINOR.

(*To be continued.*)

GERMAN NOVELISTS.

"THE Press and Rostrum in Germany alike degraded; the Stage kept alive by scraps from foreign sources; Poetry and Art utterly destitute of vigour; Music grown degenerate; Literature a sickly romanticism devoid of any originality; the national language culpably neglected, disfigured by the introduction of foreign words, and in its turn disfiguring German modes of thought and the German nature:"*—Such is the picture of modern intellectual and artistic Germany presented by a German of no mean authority.

But is the picture a correct one? It is not. It is the passionate cry of an idealist wrung from him by the pangs of an over-quick and unsatisfied instinct of perfection.

For in good sooth modern German literature is the finest in the world. When the mind, worn and jaded by the wearisome stage-tricks of English sensationalism or the laboured glitter of French paradox, turns to this literature for relief and refreshment, the feeling is almost as when one enters some placid haven after long buffeting by the storms of ocean. Here there is nothing forced, nothing tricky, nothing meretricious. The atmosphere is one of philosophic calm. There is a liberty of thought and a freshness of sentiment to which the purely English reader is a stranger.

Nor is the reason of this contrast far to seek. As every writer reflects unconsciously the spirit of his age, so does he reflect the spirit of his country and its institutions. In England life is swift, busy, practical. Amid the seething strife of political parties and the clash of a hundred religionisms, the truth, when spoken at all, must always be spoken controversially. The poet, the novelist, cannot detach himself from the influence of party and of creed. Hence anything largely objective is from the outset impossible. The author who should write for all time panders to some popular prejudice and sacrifices to the interests of party what was meant for the edification of humanity. It is the onlooker who sees most of the game of life. But the English writer has no patience to look on; he must needs mingle in the strife. His views are, as a natural consequence, narrow, prejudiced, subjective.

It is not so in Germany. There a difference in climate and in institutions has engendered a habit of thought calmer, broader, more objective. Centuries of despotism, in excluding the burgher from the arena of politics, have led him to think deeply and dispassion-

* Held : *Staat und Gesellschaft*, III. 50.

ately. The vulgar excitement of the vestry or the polling-booth, which delights the energetic Englishman, has few attractions for his more contemplative cousin.* The latter regards these things—nay life itself—as much as possible from a distance—from an outside point of observation. To him they are proper subjects for philosophic or artistic consideration, not things to flush his cheek with a sense of gratified ambition, or to turn it pale with disappointed hope. He is well content to stand with folded arms upon the bank and watch with curious eyes the stream of human life sweep by in swift effulgence.

In virtue of this artistic objectivity the German novelist writes simply and naturally, without effort and without constraint. It is true that this very freedom of motion leads him at times to write carelessly and clumsily, whilst, occasionally, from sheer excess of thought, his style becomes cloudy, tedious and turgid.

But in the main his writing comes, as all true writing must come, straight from the heart. He does not, like the Frenchman, set his invention on the rack to originate some fresh phase of quintessential vice. He does not, like the ever-practical Englishman, construct a novel as a Chinaman fabricates a puzzle, and sacrifice all else to the wearisome ingenuity of a perfect plot. Above all, he does not mutilate eternal emotions on the Procrustean couch of modern conventionality. He does not write with the fear of moral censorship before his eyes. He has no dread of Mrs. Grundy. He dares, without malice on the one hand or extenuation on the other, to reflect Nature as manifested either in virtue or in vice.

Hence the ripe glory of German belletristic literature. Hence the magic charm that it exercises over philosophic and poetic minds in all countries. To read a German novel in the original is a real and healthy recreation. Lacking, in great measure, that element of coarse excitement, which has made the reading of English novels little better than a kind of semi-intellectual dram-drinking, it regales the mind with a catholic philosophy, and holds up to Nature a mirror purged of pettiness, and prejudice, and cant. So much is this the case that he who has once revelled in this rich banquet can scarce contemplate, without positive disgust, the superficial philosophy, the mechanical artifice, the garish transformation scenes, which too often go to compose a modern English novel.

* I extract the following from the "Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung," for November, 23rd, 1872: "Bei den gestern in Berlin vorgenommenen Stadtverordnetenwahlen war die Betheiligung eine sehr schwache. In einzelnen Bezirken betrug sie kaum 9 procent und durchschnittlich etwas über 12 procent. Von den in 11 Bezirken wahlberechtigten 16,882 Bürgern hatten nur 2,095 es der Mühe für Werth gehalten von ihrem Rechte Gebrauch zu machen, &c." And this when the most important municipal affairs, such as the draining of Berlin and the replacement of public by private markets, were awaiting the decision of the newly-elected authorities.

No doubt, in point of mere mechanism, the English novel is superior to all others. What is technically called "construction" here attains its ultimate perfection. In this respect the novels of Miss Braddon and Mr. Wilkie Collins leave nothing to desire. But, after all, mechanism is not Art. A chess-automaton may excite our wonder, but a Guido-head stirs with its sweet force of ideal beauty, the most sluggish nature to its depths. Nay, it is not too much to say, that construction can be so perfect as to become unnatural and, therefore, inartistic.

For what is Art? Is it not the simple, loyal, loving reproduction of Nature? Not necessarily the reproduction of every petty detail, but of the broad general features. And if this be so, the first aim of the artist, whether with pencil or with pen, must be to be natural.

Look at some child as on a summer afternoon, play-tired, it throws itself beneath a tree to rest. It has no self-consciousness. It cares not who may be looking. It does not study to compose its limbs into some attitude of grace; and, for this very reason, its posture is divinely graceful. It thinks of nothing. The stocks may have risen or have fallen—one nation may be minded on the morrow to fall with fire and sword upon another and, meanwhile, may be pestering heaven for certificates of character—but the sweet child knows nothing of this guilt and turmoil. With parted lips and hair downstreaming in a mesh of tangled gold, it lies serene, unconscious, head pillowed on the rounded arm, and form relaxed in utter heedlessness of self.

Even so is it with the artist—that truest child of Nature. His function is to look on and describe or delineate, not to mingle in the strife of men. He has but to be true to himself and Nature. With a divine absence of all self-consciousness he flings himself in spirit on the great mother's lap, and all he is and does becomes transfigured with exceeding glory.

And so, to be artistic, a nation must, before all things, be natural. The more conventional a nation, the less of true art will she and can she nourish in her midst.

Hence the low state of Art amongst the English. For where on the wide surface of this planet can we find a nation more grotesquely and pitifully conventional? Stiff, awkward, reserved, self-conscious, hypocritical, the Englishman is as far removed from the artist as earth from heaven. Place him where you will, except in the midst of practical life, and his presence seems incongruous and unnatural. Bustling in hot haste along Cornhill, or gliding, the umbrella-ed dandy, amongst the dingy purlieus of May-Fair, he seems in his place, and deserves his reputation as the best-dressed man in Europe. But on the sunny champaigns of fertile France, on the vine-clad slopes that foil the flashing Rhine, in the olive-groves of Italy and under the dark chestnuts of Spain, the Englishman is indeed a con-

tradition to the harmony of Nature, and a sorrow to the eyes of the artist. Always independent and self-asserting, he has a character which no difficulties can dishearten, but which no beauty can render pliant and accommodating. Proud, angular, self-sufficient, he can never be content to form a note in some vast harmony—to sacrifice himself to Beauty, and become a congruous part of some artistic cosmos.

Hence there is in England Genius, but very little Art. Against the latter all influences combine. A cheerless climate, a creed of bloodless negations,* a petty conventionalism which strives to strangle all natural instincts in the birth, above all, the degraded spirit of hucksterism—these and similar causes are more than sufficient to account for the almost utter absence of the art-instinct. I speak not of the *rari nantes*—of the little throng of warmer-blooded esoterics. I speak of the English people as a whole, and I say without fear of contradiction, that they have absolutely no relish for Art—that they are ignorant of its essential characteristics—that, through non-use or misuse during successive generations, the organ by which alone they could appreciate it has lost its power of functioning. Let Lord Lytton,† for example, lavish the rich treasures of his ripe artistic knowledge on such a work as “The Last Days of Pompeii,” and it will be read at the last, not for its art, but for its interest. All the harmony of its proportions, all the exquisite finish of its details, all the classic grace of its ornamentation, are thrown away upon the English reader. True, he plods through the book with pluck and perseverance, but it is only because he is sustained by the hope that, with luck, he may soon light on an abduction, or revel in the moist horrors of a murder.

And so it is in everything. The shop fronts are defiled with the vulgarities of chromo-lithograph, and the hapless wayfarer, driven indoors by stress of colouring, finds too often that he has escaped this torture of the eyes, only to yield his ears to the more protracted agony of some coarse ditty, fresh-spawned of the Oxford Music Hall.

In the same way modern English novels are, with certain notable exceptions, what chromo-lithographs are to the painting of an artist, and “Champagne Charley” to the divine melodies of some great composer. The fact is the Englishman likes everything strong, vivid, high-flavoured. As he consumes port and sherry specially branded to suit the exigencies of his palate, so he likes plenty of colour in his pictures and abundance of sensation in his novels. In such matters, his instincts are still untutored and savage. Anything simple, natural, life-like, is in his eyes a mere wearisome commonplace. For this reason you may witness oftentimes at some centre of human

* I do not, of course, mean thus to describe Protestantism in its essence, but merely certain popular perversions of it.

† Alas! since this article was written England has had to mourn the loss of this most finished and conscientious of artists.

confluence, a sea of curious faces upturned in white excitement towards some hunger-driven acrobat, plying his ghastly trade 'twixt earth and heaven. And around that spot there shall be some glorious landscape, rich with the green splendour of spring or the mellow tints of autumn, offering a something to the soul which should make every true heart throb the quicker, and every true eye glance the brighter—and not one of all that throng shall vouchsafe it thought or look. No! that is something merely natural and lovely. Give us something artificial, morbid, sensational. Give us danger—by proxy!—and excitement; not nature and enjoyment. And if at the end the poor, heaven-jumping wretch chance to miss his footing and come down into their midst a crushed, bleeding mass, whence all likeness of humanity is well-nigh fled, well—they pity him of course; but the thrill of that sudden unprogrammed descent was, nevertheless, not without its charm of extempore sensationalism.*

What Art is possible to a nation such as this? In its place we have in England either on the one hand, sensationalism, or on the other, conventional morality. It has come to be a choice between the wild excitement of the popular novel or the twaddling sentimentality of goody story-books. The one class is as far removed from true Art as the other.

Not that Art is immoral. On the contrary, the highest art involves the highest morality. But it does so only when pursued for its own sake. The artist who attempts to make his art subservient to some moral purpose is in no true sense of the word an artist. He commits a sin against Nature. And his morality will be in consequence weak, superficial, valueless. Whilst, on the other hand, the artist who thinks of nothing but his Art, who devotes himself thereto with loving singleness of purpose, cannot fail to exercise the most beneficial influence on morality. And for this reason; that the aims of both Morality and Art are identical, viz., the True and the Beautiful. And if this be so, it is impossible for the devoted artist to sin against objective Morality, however much he may violate its conventional canons.

Of the truth of this statement Shakespeare offers the most conspicuous example. In him there is no certain trace of aught other than the artist. His religion—his professional education—are alike obscure. So obviously is this the case, that men have written laboured tomes to prove on the one hand, that he was a Papist, on the other a Protestant—that he must have been trained for the Bar—that he had evidently studied medicine. The real truth is, that he was simply a consummate artist, to whom, having the inspiration of Art, all other things were added. And yet where is the guardian of public morality,

* I do not mean to say that this craving for the sensational is confined to the English, but certainly no other nation (except, of course, the American, which is equally destitute of the art-instinct) possesses it to the same extent.

be he bishop or magistrate, who will dare to say that Shakespeare's influence is aught but elevating? Is not he—the man of no religion or of all religions—of no profession or of all professions—the nocturnal poacher of venison—the loose strolling player—read and taught in every school and college in England? And if so, is there not a religion and a morality in Art itself?

And what is true of poetry is equally true of romance. To exert a beneficial influence, it must be written not to advocate a theory or point a moral, but simply to express the Beautiful. Moral and religious treatises have their own value, but they have also their own place. And that place is not in the pages of romance. Let English novelists study Art for its own sake, and they may rest assured that they will be doing more to help on the cause of true morality and catholic religion than has been done by all the novels with a purpose ever written. The art-instinct is itself divine, and he who remains true to it, will never be far from God.

It may seem strange, at a time when the writings of Ouida are greedily devoured, to talk of the conventionalism of English novels. But the spirit of conventionalism is bred in the very bone of English society, and must come out in the flesh of English novel-writing. As touching this matter it may do the purely English reader good to hear himself and his nation described by an outside observer, not in the columns of some heated political journal, but in the judicial pages of a calm literary periodical: "In England the intelligent seekers after truth form but a little band in the midst of a nation in whose most influential circles bigotry, prudery, and social caprice have now-a-days attained to such a pitch of authority that matters of taste are decided almost exclusively by them."*

The consequences of this spirit of conventionalism are on the one hand, sensational novels, on the other, novels with a purpose.† Both are equally unnatural, equally morbid, equally inartistic. The loving reproduction of Nature, the recognition of the great truth that what form and colour are to the artist of the pencil, the lights and shades of human feeling are to the artist of the pen—these are equally wanting in both. All is artificial, the product of an unnatural state of society and a morbid perversion of sentiment.

In strongest contrast to all this, stands out the better description of German novel. It does not aim at respectability. It has no thought of pandering to the spirit of conventionalism. It is independent. It lives and moves in a higher atmosphere of its own. To be the mere reflection of popular prejudice or prudery—the creature of the limited and the artificial—it holds far beneath its dignity. The eternal passions of the human heart—the inexorable facts of fate and

* *Literarisches Wochenblatt*. Nov. 23rd, 1872.

† The German "*Tendenznovellen*."

circumstance—these it describes grandly and impartially, neither revelling in the more pitiful aspects of humanity, nor childishly seeking to conceal their nakedness beneath the flimsy veil of an over-dainty phraseology. It is moral, not because it rigidly excludes all mention of immorality, but because it aims with conscientious objectivity at delineating the True and Real, wherever found. It is not weak and prudish; keeping its hands before its eyes, lest it should see somewhat to shock its modesty. On the contrary, it is manly, self-reliant, ready to face any fact however hard, and grapple with every phase of suffering humanity; for it knows that vice and virtue are notes equally wrung from the human heart by the hand of circumstance, and that he who would worship Art, or understand his fellows, must study both alike with equal diligence.

Of this objectivity in its grandest development there is perhaps no better example than Spielhagen. True, it is not given to him as it was to Shakespeare and to Goethe, to sit on a mountain summit and look down serene on the ferment of human passion and the turmoil of human intercourse. Such natures need centuries to produce. But still it is wonderful to notice with what breadth of sympathy Spielhagen, standing just outside the throng of men, chooses his types of character, and bids them play their several parts on the stage of his romance. Bitter against one class alone—the wretched Junkers, who in virtue of a stall-fed courage have arrogated to themselves from time immemorial a position which would be ludicrous if it were not so pernicious to the best interests of Germany—Spielhagen describes all other classes with a grand and natural impartiality. Nay, in the Graf Oldenburg who plays so important a part in his "*Problematische Naturen*," he has, with a spirit of fairness which reflects the utmost credit on his character, striven to show that even in the class of the selfish, sensual, and silly German aristocracy it is possible for a great heart to beat and a noble nature to energize.

I know no modern author who has laid human nature so universally under contribution and with such uniform success as Spielhagen. His canvas is crowded with figures all true to nature, but all more or less typical. The inheritor of ancestral imbecility, whose talk is of dogs and horses, and whose virtue consists in a constant readiness to stake his own valueless, against some fellow-creature's valuable life—the professor whose seething brain boils over at last in a madness replete with strange and startling wisdom—the young girl who, possessed of physical desire, tempts to a love whose fruit is bitterness of sorrow—the beauteous matron who, also loving, sheds the charm of holy self-denial over an intercourse that else had passed the bounds of friendship—above all, the poor, perplexed nature, which, full of noble impulses and lofty aspirations, is yet the thrall of self and indecision—these are but a few of the characters which, drawn with realistic hand, yet reveal to us an idealist who aims at something higher

than the reproduction of mere externalism, who is ever conscious of the mystery of life and the surpassing interest of psychological development.

That Spielhagen has many faults it is impossible to gainsay. His novels are too long and too loosely put together. In this respect he might learn much from his English rivals. In spite of the flowing beauty of his style, they leave an impression of clumsiness and want of finish. His genius is in fact too robust and imperious to descend to petty technicalities. He pursues an ideal with gigantic strides, but without much attention to grace of movement. But, in spite of these and other faults, he contests at this moment the literary supremacy of Germany with Auerbach and Freytag, and in many important qualities is superior to either.

In Auerbach, again, the same strong conviction of the superiority of mind over matter, of the invisible over the visible, of psychology over incident, confronts one at every turn. Take, for example, the "*Landhaus am Rhein*." In what does the real interest of the book consist? Not assuredly in its "action," for of this there is but little, and that little, tame and, except at the very end, commonplace. It is interesting solely as a study of character—as a minute analysis of psychical development; and, viewed in this way, it is a work of marvellous capacity. In almost every character in which such a development is possible, there is a gradual growth and expansion of the inner nature traced with a subtlety and a vigour positively astounding. In reading it we become at once aware that all of life which is external—its so called adventures—the moving accidents by flood and field, are indeed in the strictest logical sense of the term, but *accidents*—not bound up with its essence—not even endued with the inseparability of *properties*—in no wise constituting its truest and deepest interest. It is in the region of the spirit, in the subtle play of emotion, in the gradual development of character, in the dexterous unravelling of the tangled skein of human motives, that Auerbach, like every true romancist, alone can find a congenial sphere for his abilities. And so, though Sonnenkamp, being introduced to us at an age when the character is no longer capable of fresh impressions, remains from first to last the same—a bold, bad man, despising his weaker fellow-mortals, and yet with that apparent inconsistency which marks such natures, coveting their applause—nay, even intriguing with pitiful vanity for a patent of nobility fresh-lackered—all the other main characters grow beneath the fostering hand of circumstance into somewhat nobler and higher than their originals. So, Roland, the spoilt darling of fortune, unfolds, under the genial influence of Erich, the virtues which from the first lay hidden, germ-like, in his nature; until at the last, without the faintest violation of the probable, this wayward child of wealth, thus trained by the hand of love, and purified in the furnace of affliction, goes forth a man of noble principles, and holy hatred of

oppression, to fight the Battle of Freedom in the New World. So, too, Manna, the sweet daughter of the cloister, brought up at first under influences which tend to foster an egotism narrow as that of the world, if not so self-indulgent, ripens in the strong sunlight of Erich's love, into the sweet maturity of sympathetic womanhood.

That such a work should find small acceptance in England, I can well believe. In the first place, Auerbach's style is inimitable in its massive simplicity and child-like originality. It is the purest and most pellucid medium—with the single exception of the style of Göthe in his "*Leiden des jungen Werthers*"—through which German romancist ever transmitted the rays of human thought and feeling. And all this is lost in a translation. But there are other reasons going far deeper to account for the fact, that, whilst a sensational novel runs through manifold editions, this grand work of the German novelist has, in England, remained comparatively unread. I do not refer to the fact that there are a certain number of people in England who could and would read it in the original; this number is small indeed; for the parrot-like knowledge of German acquired by an English school-girl, and the ponderous misapprehension of it attained by the academician in the infructuous seclusion of his study, are alike insufficient for the proper understanding of such a work. The root of the matter lies far deeper. There is in the English nature of the present day a disrelish for aught but the sensational, the morbid, the artificial; and it is simply impossible that the lover of mere external incident, should read such a work with interest. It is written for men and women of the nobler type, not for puling clerks and lackadaisical soubrettes.

It would be foreign to my purpose to dwell at any length on the works of Hackländer, who has been called, not without some reason, the Dickens of Germany. He has the same love for the less known phases of human life, the same power of microscopic description, the same warm philanthropic heart; but, like Dickens, he is essentially one-sided. And—as is so often the case with Dickens—he writes with a purpose, and falls short, therefore, of the highest Art and the highest influence. This is abundantly evident in his greatest and most popular romance, "*Das Europäische Sklavenleben*," the moral drift of which is obvious from its very title, and in which, true to his purpose, but renegade to Art, he distorts, exaggerates, and actually weakens a cause in itself noble and deserving, by committing himself from the outset to its too partial advocacy. From the judge he degenerates into the special pleader; from the artist into the one-idea-ed philanthropist.

Neither, in spite of his enormous popularity,* can the highest place amongst German writers of fiction be assigned to Freytag. His

* "*Soll und Haben*" passed through six editions in two years—a success which for a German work, must be accounted very remarkable.

creations are manly and objective, but they lack those finer touches which reveal the insight into souls. This is very evident if we contrast his "Soll und Haben" with Auerbach's "Landhaus am Rhein." In each alike the interest centres in the history of two young people. But in Auerbach's work, as we have seen, the interest is internal and psychical; in Freytag's it is external and physical. The latter is true to that Horatian maxim which itself is so often untrue to Nature, that a character should remain to the end as it started at the beginning. His Anton Wohlfart and Veitel Itzig, though we are introduced to both at an age when character is seldom formed, undergo in the whole course of the story no other change than such as is inevitable to physical growth and larger intercourse with men. The fact is, Freytag has perception, but no instinct. He paints marvellously well what he sees, but he has no power to feel towards the invisible.*

As to his only other romance, "Die Verlorene Handschrift," it is vastly inferior to the first. It is tedious, disconnected, improbable, and owes the chief part of the success it has achieved to the *prestige* attaching to its predecessor.

I pass over the writings of Gutzkow, bold and striking as they are, because I fail to recognise in them a distinctively German element. In his earlier works, at any rate, the source of his inspiration must be sought on the left bank of the Rhine. All the daring infidelity of Voltaire, mixed with no small portion of his sparkling wit and lucid statement of objections, combined with that peculiar sensuality which sets love and suicide ever near each other—these characteristics of his earlier writings point unmistakeably to Gallic influence. Of course that influence had already assumed a German garb in the "Leiden des jungen Werthers," but this wonderful piece of morbid psychology, by which Göthe purged his own mind of so much perilous nonsense, has had a precisely opposite effect upon many of his countrymen. And one at least of its victims would seem to have been Gutzkow.

Neither will I do more than mention Mühlbach, the painstaking compiler of historical romance, whose works, though betraying at times an over confidence in the truth of the literature of memoirs, are still always readable and generally instructive. But another lady deserves a longer notice: I mean the talented authoress of some of the most popular works in modern German literature—notably of "Die alte Mamsell" and "Goldelsie." Both of these are works which exhibit considerable power of construction, delicacy of perception, and graphic vigour of description. But they, too, like those

* I am sorry that I cannot agree with the Chevalier Bunsen in regarding the English translation as "rivalling successfully the spirited tone and classical style for which the German original is justly and universally admired." But it is very faithful.

of Freytag, fall short of the highest excellence. They concern themselves too much with the outside of things; they are superficial, the work of one who has no firm grasp of the problems of life. They are to the romances of Auerbach or Spielhagen what the poetry of Mrs. Hemans is to that of Shelley. There are too many flowers for the fruit. In fine, if translated, they could hardly fail to be successful in England.

There is, however, another well-known name in modern German literature which is attached to works at once distinctively German and extraordinarily beautiful. I mean, of course, Heyse. It is true that a celebrated German critic has said, comparing him with Spielhagen: "Spielhagen is like a grand antique statue lacking, perhaps, this or that inferior member, but never without that which gives expression and majesty to the whole—the head. Heyse, on the contrary, is a modern statuette, exquisitely finished in other respects, but unfortunately without the head." But I venture to think that, in passing this severe judgment, the critic has been unconsciously influenced by the fact that all Heyse's works are diminutive. They are miniatures, and possess all the elaborate grace and finish which we associate with such productions. But they are not headless and meaningless images; on the contrary, everyone of them is a perfect psychological study. I know of nothing in any literature more beautiful than some of these short stories so full of a tender grace and an inimitable pathos. Alas! that it should be so impossible to convey any adequate idea of them to the English reader. Not only has Heyse's style a peculiar and delicate aroma which absolutely defies translation, but, in the whole range of English literature, there is no author with whom he could be compared in such a manner as to enable the English reader to form an intelligent estimate of his genius. He does not exclude himself from his writings—you see him ever standing in the midst of his creations, with the same pensive brow and calm deep-watching eyes, and, for the most part (for he is by nature hopeful and joyous), the same placid smile upon the lips. So he stands, the very embodiment of human sympathy, never rising to the angels or sinking to the devils, but always on the just level of average humanity; prepared to see and welcome all that there is around of good and noble; prepared to pity, yea, shocking as it may sound, even sometimes to pardon, much of error and of sin.

Such is Heyse. Perhaps, in strictest justice, one has no right to place him on the majestic elevation of Spielhagen or Auerbach. But who can be absolutely impartial in judging of such an author? He creeps into one's heart and storms it with his tender force of sympathy, whether we will or no. And few works, indeed, have such a directly softening and humanizing influence as these little tales of hapless passion or requited love. Their perfection of structure and delicacy of mental analysis are simply perfect. I have already said that

it might be too much to assert that Heyse is an artist of the very highest type, but never assuredly has there breathed a human being more intimately penetrated with the art-instinct. His sensibility to artistic impressions, whether physical or psychical, is unsurpassed. He moves from land to land, and character to character, reflecting the changed scenery of the one and the altered passions of the other with equal facility and truth. In reading him, I become curious to know if there is anything in this wide earth which, to his eyes, has not in its inmost kernel some lurking soul of good; if there is any variety of man's mysterious nature, any passion of his suffering heart, with which he cannot sympathize.

In this enthusiasm of humanity, Heyse has only one rival, and that one a writer who, his superior in philosophy and originality, is decidedly his inferior in Art. I mean that wayward child of genius, Jean Paul. It is true I had meant this article to include only novelists of the present generation; but it is so impossible to write of German romance without thinking of the author of the "Flegeljahre," that I may be pardoned if, whilst leaving unnoticed other earlier writers, such as the once-popular but foolish Claudens, and even the graceful Hauff, I venture to say somewhat about this most original of geniuses.

And first a few words as to Jean Paul's style. It is verily one to drive a pedantic critic mad. For, instead of suffering himself to be the slave of words, he actually aspires to be their master. He takes not the faintest interest in the reproduction of time-honoured modes of expression and licensed formulæ of falsehood. And possessing an astounding fertility of thought, he finds oftentimes no sufficiency of words to fit it, and, in consequence, there is the strangest of tussles between him and his vocabulary, he exerting all his force of will to ram home his ideas into symbols obviously too small for them, and the words writhing themselves under the process into the wildest variety of contortions. The result is a style which can be excused and accounted for, but can under no circumstances be admired. It is in the highest degree inelegant and very often obscure. It is true that when Jean Paul commenced to write, style, as such, had hardly begun to be cultivated in Germany. That sharp critic Börne, says that up to his time Germany had produced but one writer with a clearly defined style, viz., Lessing,* and compares the looseness of German with the smartness and precision of French composition. But even in those days he might, but for his modesty, have added at least one other name—his own—to that of Lessing. There is no finer piece of poetic prose in the German language than Börne's "Denkrede über Jean Paul." And since then the varieties of style have received

* "Vielleicht ist Lessing der Einzige, von dem man bestimmt behaupten kann: er hat einen Styl." *Bemerkungen über Sprache und Styl.*

the attention they deserve. Auerbach, Spielhagen, Heyse, all write with an elegance and finish which can be paralleled amongst English novelists only by Lord Lytton.

But in spite of the harshness and Titanic wildness of Jean Paul's style, he captivates and entrances every nature whose instincts have not been worn to bluntness by a life of selfishness or profligacy. Himself born poor, and having to fight his upward way through many tedious obstacles, he has the tenderest sympathy with his suffering fellow-mortals. He looks forth upon the world with eyes charged with a divine compassion and heart brimming over with an exhaustless love. And the minuteness of his observation is as marvellous as the catholicity of his affection. He sees God in everything, and goodness working where one might least expect it. If it be a truer sign of genius to bring out the hidden meaning of common things and thoughts—to decipher the analogies of ordinary life—than it is to “touch the heavens with front sublime” or move majestic amidst starry gods—then was Jean Paul a genius of the most exalted order. For he threw a new and precious light on everything. He had but to show himself and lo! all surrounding space was glorious as at the descent of an archangel. He taught men unceasingly the folly and profanity of calling things “common and unclean.” And few can read his works without at once reverencing the writer and loving his fellows more truly. The reader of English sensationalism may yawn, and the pyrrhonic worldling may smile at the commonplace adventures of Walt and Vult; but there is no true heart which will not beat the quicker with a sense of grateful sympathy at their perusal. For the joys and sorrows of fraternal friendship, its quarrels and its reconciliations, its rising hopes and breathings of despair—these are notes touched by the hand of a master, and, though the hand be vanished and the harp be broken, the strains still echo, sweet and constant, in the changeless heart of man.

A. EUBULE-EVANS.

SCHOOL BOARD COMEDIES.

THERE is no such light reading out now-a-days as the reports of school-boards produce, and some of the cases before the magistrates are downright broad farce. It is surprising, indeed, that no farce has yet been put upon the stage turning upon these comedies of the State educational machinery—but perhaps the Lord Chamberlain would *veto* any attempt to exhibit the absurdities of the working of school-board law as frankly as those of the working of the Forbes-Mackenzie Act as to *bonâ fide* travellers were exhibited on the stage years ago. It is not to be doubted that that functionary—who exercises with regard to plays a function of a kind long ago abolished with regard to books—holds strong views as to the duty of the Government to regulate education, and would scarcely look with a genial eye upon a play which, to the political philosopher, hit by a *ricochet* his own function. Not that either Lord Sydney or the members of the London, Croydon, Birmingham, and other school boards are likely to trouble themselves much about political philosophy, or even to be barely aware of the fact that there are thinking men who believe it would be better for England and the world if all the school-boards were at the bottom of the sea But we must not get serious: let us keep to the comedy that is enacted under our very eyes.

A week or two ago a poor man was summoned for not compelling his little boy to attend school. He had done his best, but the young scapegrace—who can hardly have read Mr. Herbert Spencer, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and the rest—obstinately continued to play truant. It was urged upon the magistrate—Mr. Ingham, I think—that, as the father had sent his boy to school and endeavoured to comply with the Act, he was clear of the law; but the gentleman prosecuting for the School-board urged that he was still liable to a fine. And fined he was, poor man! So, if young hopeful keeps on playing truant the School-board may keep on summoning the father as fast as summonses can be made returnable, and he can be taxed to the tune of several shillings for about (I suppose) every week.

The magistrate is reported to have said that it was a great oversight in the Act that it did not give magistrates power to flog little boys who played truant; and the School-board official remarked sarcastically, that it was only the sons of *gentlemen* who got flogged in these enlightened days. Now this suggests a new development of the democratic spirit. Shall the birch be the privilege of an effete aristocracy? Forbid it, Odger, Nieass, Guedalla, Guile, Eccarius, and

all the rest of those People's men with the astonishing surnames! True, Guile or Eccarius is at liberty to birch his own boys now, but that is not enough to satisfy the spirit of the times. It is the duty of the Government to save the poor working man from drinking too much; from working too many hours; from living in bad houses; from having his vote known—and in fact from everything that can possibly be meddled with in his behalf. Is it not, then, the duty of the Government to birch his little boys for him, the birches being paid for out of the taxes?

But, even supposing this difficulty got over, another follows. A girl can play truant more easily than a boy, perhaps; at all events she can do it. And is the Act to give magistrates power to flog a girl? Or how are the girls to be dealt with?

Nor is that all. How are *very* naughty boys and girls to be dealt with when they are actually got within the four walls of the Board school-room? If very "obstrepulous," are they to be put in stocks under a magistrate's order, or what is to be done with them! How is the united force of all the great Government departments to deal with this momentous question of playing truant? It seems to me that a Royal Commission ought to be appointed to inquire into this and some related matters, before any legislation is ventured upon. For ramifications are endless. If the Government undertakes to force little boys and girls to school, it must undertake much more. Suppose a little boy were always to refuse to eat his breakfast, what then? Nobody would contend that a child should be forced to go to school without food. And the question arises, how could Mr. Ingham compel that boy to eat his breakfast? Again, suppose he always tore up his clothes,—nobody would contend that his father ought to send him to school naked, and—but in fact I must refrain from pushing to their limits the intricate questions of school-board policy upon which Mr. Forster and the Council may yet be called upon to adjudicate.

Another magistrate—Mr. Newton, I think—in dealing with some comic cases that came before him, is said to have complained severely of the responsibilities the Act threw upon magistrates with respect to compelling the attendance of children at school. It was alleged that one little boy, whose father was summoned on account of his not attending school, had a blister somewhere or other about his person. Was that a "reasonable excuse" under the Act? It was ridiculous, said Mr. Newton, that Parliament should throw upon a magistrate the *onus* of deciding (1) whether a little boy had a blister, and (2) whether it was such a blister as constituted a "reasonable excuse." I quite agree with Mr. Newton. The President and Mr. Forster are the proper parties to decide upon such questions. I think this little boy lived in a slum in Soho or "the Dials." If the noble President of the Council had only gone and looked at the poor fellow's

blister, what might not his urbanity have effected! All the little boys in the neighbourhood would have rushed to school at once.

In another case, the same day, before the same magistrate, a mother barely ten days up from her last confinement, was summoned for not sending her little girl to school. Her excuse was that this little maid was the only nurse of herself and the baby. Here, indeed, we come to something like tragedy; at all events, it is comedy that makes your heart ache. But this was clearly not a "reasonable excuse" under the Act,—which by a strange oversight says nothing about poor women's confinements!—and a fine was inflicted, all correct. Who, that knows the value of the multiplication table to a child of seven who never has anything to multiply—who, that has felt his heart warm over Standard I. of the Revised Code, will not rejoice that this poor, pale, half-starved victim of a mother had to pay two shillings fine, with three shillings costs, at the instance of that august body the London School-board?

A la bonne heure, that reminds me! The comedy comes back. I have just read that Mr. T. B. Smithies has given notice of the following proposition:

"That it is desirable to introduce into any amendment of the Elementary Education Act a clause providing:—That no parent shall be at liberty to send out any child under thirteen years of age for employment in any trade or occupation for pecuniary profit; and that no employer shall engage the services of any such child without the production of a certificate from a certified schoolmaster, or school inspector, of the child having passed through a course of elementary education."

The upshot of this is that if the Act had contained the Smithies Clause, I might have been fined for employing a ragged little wretch to sweep the snow from my door the other morning, unless I had first got him to produce a certificate of having been through "a course of elementary education." Why, half the poor children in London earn money before they are twelve, and are the better and not the worse for it. It is a far finer education for many a poor little chit to tend her mother and the baby, or do chores in the homes of those who are better off, than she would get by going to school and being up to Standard I. Some of the best servants I have ever had could neither read nor write, and they were one or two of them wise as well as good; while two of the best instructed have been thieves. It is, indeed, desirable that every child should be well taught, but not at the cost of sending the policeman into every home, and setting magistrates to flog little boys and girls who play truant.

We are growing serious again. But, alas! the absurdities in these matters are apt to take sudden dives and go far underground. You must not imagine the policeman in the home is a joke. By no means. A School-board deputation waited upon Mr. Forster the other

day to request that when the Act was amended the Boards might be supplied with inquisitorial powers of various kinds. Mr. Forster rightly answered that it would be contrary to the whole spirit of English law, and indeed jurisprudence in general, to compel a man to furnish the means of convicting himself. These School-board gentry were quite ready with their answer, and here we strike upon the comedy again: "Oh, the principle was already admitted in Census law and Income-tax law." But it is deeply comic to find "the never-ending audacity of elected persons" so great in this instance that the elected persons fail to remember that Income-tax law is sorely complained of, and even Census law.

If, in addition to its other responsibilities, the London School Board (the thing has been suggested more than once) should have cast upon it the duty of suppressing juvenile literature held to be immoral, the comedy of the situation would have gone one step farther. There is plenty of literature of all kinds, juvenile and adult, which most of us agree in considering immoral, and political philosophers would agree with political tinkers and dabblers in desiring to have it suppressed. But the philosopher thinks he sees clearly that any suppression by legislative measures would carry with it a more than compensating amount of mischief and lead to fresh comedy which must by and by flower into tragedy. If you send the publisher of "The Boy Pirates" to prison, where are you to stop? It is, in another form, the question which arises upon laws that profess to put down immoral literature appealing to adults. If you put down by force of law a wretched little bit of immoral writing that issues from some social rat-hole, why do you allow those great men of science, Hocus, Pocus, and Jocus, to disseminate among the educated classes principles which, in your honest opinion, lead to the uprooting of all morality whatever? Comedy, again. And very quickly we descend to roaring farce. For it is quite plain that if all this comes within the duty of the Government, so must much more. Hadn't you better take children from their parents altogether, and feed, clothe, and educate them by Act of Parliament from first to last? That is what it must come to, if we go on like this.

Meanwhile some very important under-currents seem to be moving along quite unnoticed; and some of the trash they carry with them is part of the comedy which belongs to the whole of this new, unreasoning madness. For instance, the middle classes are also, it seems, to demand government interference as to the qualifications of teachers, and the reason given is that the parents themselves are the judges of what is good instruction or the reverse. But *quis custodiet ipsos custodes*? Where is the judgment to come from in the last resort? And more comic still is the dulness which fails to ask the question, If the children of a given generation are supposed to have been well-instructed under the care of the government, why

are they not to be competent judges, when adults, of the instruction to be given to *their* children? By what mysterious process are the officers of a representative government to gather up all the wisdom and knowledge into their own bureaux, while those who vote the government who choose the officers are to continue incompetent? Does our history countenance the notion that the influence of government machinery in teaching of any kind has been something in advance of the influence from without? If not, by what new process is the stream suddenly to rise above its source? "Why, Democracy will secure—" *Ah, vraiment!* Don't, *pray* don't make a fellow laugh *too* much!

You must excuse the petition, for what on earth do these Middle-class School Companies, Limited Liability, mean, if the middle class are not fit judges of the schools their children are to go to? My brothers and sisters, I humbly counsel you to keep a sharp look-out on this particular development of the new school madness. And now I am going to say something *not* so funny. There are signs, visible enough to men who read, that *the whole teaching caste are making a rush for power and place*. Keep your weather-eye upon this movement! Would it surprise you to hear, that many, if not most of the new books of "instruction" lately published have this one peculiarity—that they show a desire to magnify the office of the professional teacher, to cast away as lumber those facilities for self-instruction and home tuition of which we used to hear so much a score of years ago, and indeed to throw difficulties in the way by wilfully omitting what the books are bound to supply? These are facts, not fancies. I have lately had occasion to compare some of the new-fangled elementary books with some of the old ones, and I do not hesitate to assert that the old ones are the best. The new ones are indeed *avowedly* prepared in the especial interest of "the judicious teacher." The Paradise of Pedagogues will no doubt arrive when the Chinese have overrun Europe.

But long before then, we shall have woke up to the comedy of our procedure. We shall find, as we go on, that the spread of democracy (let the International say what it pleases) means more war, more taxation; "that which knows not, ruling that which knows;" and in fact general muddle. We shall find that all the anti-bribery and ballot laws passed by what has been *most* improperly called "a parliament of huxters and duffers," have only helped political corruption and rotted public faith away. Those who have been crying in one breath for the abolition of the State Church and in the other for National Secular Education, will discover that they did not know what "secular" meant, and that they have established one national church while they were pulling down another. Those who flattered themselves that by erecting school boards they were contributing to the progress of sweetness and light will find that they

have been stereotyping for generations the errors of their forefathers and of themselves. They will learn, too late, that the free human spirit would have done all that was wanted and cleared away the errors as it went along ; while what evil it left uncured was, however painful to witness, just what *ought* to have been left uncured. And they will look upon the educational fever which has taken possession of this half century as a blundering lunacy, flogged up by fools and knaves till it went out in sells and dodges, leaving behind them deposits of corruption for other ages to sweep away into limbo.

This, my enlightened brothers and sisters, is comedy to a prophet like me, and may prove comedy to you also *en sens inverse*. But comedy or no comedy, these are the words of

ANGELO MERRITT GRAY.

THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW.

I.

A COLD clear day, with the wintry sun glittering on the frosted hedgerows and on the light snow lying upon the highway after the fall of last night, along which the rumbling Calthorpe omnibus left the track of its rolling wheels.

It was the afternoon of Christmas eve, Christmas eve two years ago, when the omnibus, which plied daily to and from Calthorpe and the Malston railway station, came rattling along the road leading to Calthorpe village, with much clatter of hoofs and jingling of harness; it being an idea of the honest countryman who drove the half-trained team, that the more noise he made with horse and harness, the more imposing became the effect of his approach. So the omnibus came clattering on within a mile of Calthorpe, when it pulled up with a suddenness which almost flung the horses on their haunches, while the driver shouted out:

"The gentleman as was for the Oak farm gets out here," adding as a good-looking young fellow, with pleasant blue eyes, and curly chestnut hair, descended from the crazy old conveyance with a portmanteau in his hand, "if ye get over the stile there, and cut across the fields to your left, you're all right for the farm."

The young man answered by a nod, and the omnibus rolled on, leaving him standing on the snowy highway, with his luggage at his feet.

"He's London bred, I s'pose," the driver observed in the ear of a passenger who shared the front seat with him, "and the town life has made him too conceited to carry his own box,"—the word "box" describing Will Drayton's leather portmanteau.

But Drayton, untouched by and unconscious of the driver's contemptuous whisper and look back, stood in the open road in the teeth of a cutting north wind, waiting till chance threw some one in his way willing to carry the luggage to his aunt's farm-house, which he was too proud to shoulder and trudge under himself.

Presently a lad came along the highway, singing some lusty melody as he tramped upon his way, who was glad enough to break the thread of his song, and carry Will Drayton's chattels, for sake of the reward promised at his journey's end.

"The old way is open yet, by Mason's field, and over the stile through

the coppice meadows?" Drayton said, as the lad lifted his portmanteau from the ground.

The boy nodded, and walked on in silence through the turnstile, and across the field-path, until his curiosity overcoming his shyness he hazarded at last,

"You've been here before, I s'pose, mister?"

Drayton laughed.

"Yes I've been here before, no doubt," he said, "seeing I was born down yonder at the Mill. But when my father died and the place was sold, I went Lunnon ways, to see if I could make my fortune."

The boy looked in swift surprise at the young man beside him, who after all was only the son of old Drayton of the Mill, who had died a bankrupt, and left his son a legacy to his brother, the husband of the widowed mistress of the Oak farm. Still, despite the memory of his father's ruin, the lad's glance went wavering from the glittering watch-chain suspended from Drayton's waistcoat-pocket to the gloves upon his hands and the fine cloth he wore in his coat; the which this clumsy country lad had never seen the like on anyone, beneath the rank of the Calthorpe gentry, while he conjectured inwardly that Drayton must have made the fortune he went to London to win.

"You're come down for the wedding, maybe?" the lad suggested presently when, his wonder having had time to cool, a sudden surmise struck him that all Drayton's fine dressing could not be for ordinary holiday.

"What wedding?" Drayton asked, while the boy flung back the gate leading into the yard of the Oak farm, wherein hens, and ducks, and cackling geese were straying freely.

"They say Nellie Drayton's going to marry my lord's head keeper," the lad said, impressively, delighted that his gossip had taken his hearer by surprise.

"Why Nellie was but a mite when I left here, nine years ago," Drayton responded doubtfully.

"She's four years older nor me," the boy said sturdily, as though those four years were ten.

"That's a great age, youngster." Drayton laughed, slipping a shilling into the lad's hand, which inspired him with a still stronger respect for Drayton's riches, and the dim and distant glories of London, where fortunes could be made so readily.

Then they were at the farm-house door, where the portmanteau was deposited with a thud, which brought a girl's face to the window, a face with bonnie eyes of blue, the shade of Willie's own, and a cloud of light hair, profuse and soft, drawn off from a rosy cheek and a forehead of snowy white.

"That is not Nell, but Jessie," Willie thought as the girl withdrew her face from the window. "She has got the golden hair, and the

laughing lips and eyes of long ago, when we went nutting together in the wood, and wading after sticklebacks in the stream."

"Mother, there's someone at the door, and I think it's cousin Willie," Jessie Drayton cried from within; and before Willie had time to push the door open for himself, it was flung wide, and Mrs. Drayton was welcoming him back to Calthorpe.

"Only for Jess, I wouldn't have knowed you, Willie, you're grown so tall and big, and so like a town gentleman," Mrs. Drayton exclaimed, looking proudly up at her nephew, who had changed from a slim lad, into a tall, fine-looking young man, during his nine years of London life. "I've got old and stiff while you've been away, lad, and the girls have grown into women; and, I suppose, you wouldn't have knowed any of us, only you seen us in the old place."

To which Willie protested he would have known them anywhere, while he kissed his cousins' flushing cheeks, and the younger one looked shyly out of her mellow brown eyes, to see how one of the group in the farm-house kitchen, not of their kith and kin, bore the friendly greeting; but my lord's head keeper never looked up from the contemplation of his strong brown hands to see the kisses given, or to mark the flush which the touch of Drayton's lips brought to Nellie's cheek.

She was the prettiest of the two girls, this younger one, of whom my lord's head keeper was said to be enamoured. Jessie was a comely country lass, fair-haired and rosy-cheeked; but Nellie's cheek was rounder and more delicately tinted, and her eyes, less laughing than the blue eyes of Jessie, were of a mellow changing brown; so that Drayton, sitting in the old farm kitchen, and watching the faces of the two girls lighted up by the glow of the warm wood fire, silently endorsed Mark Wilton's taste in choosing the delicate prettiness of Nellie, rather than the buxom comeliness of her elder sister, while sweet Nellie Drayton forgot for the moment the quiet lover setting by the ingle nook, in the wandering contemplation of Willie's glittering chain, the ring upon his finger, and the gloves he had flung carelessly down upon the table.

"So, as ye telled me in your letter, your master's dead, and ye must look for another place," Mrs. Drayton observed, meditatively, while Willie refreshed himself with meat and ale after his journey. "But then, I suppose, a good place isn't easy found, Willie?"

"I'll take a fling out of myself before I try," he answered, putting away his plate; "but I'll not find it hard to suit myself, I've got such a good character."

Here, with shy politeness, the keeper rose up and went out, feeling he had no business to listen to Willie's concerns. Half-way to the gate he turned, and glanced back to see if Nellie would steal after him for a farewell, but Nellie only smiled and nodded to the look, and Mark Wilton passed through the gate alone, clanging it after him.

II.

THE snow, which had fallen lightly all the past night, and left its thin white coating on field and highway, began drifting again as Mark Wilton crossed the coppice meadows on his way to the keeper's lodge, dropping down at first softly and slowly, but changing as the short day closed in, to swift short flakes, which went on falling all the night through, and when Christmas morning broke, a thick white sheet of snow lay over the earth, on which the sun shone with a cold frosty glitter.

In the Oak-farm kitchen, a strong wood fire blazed upon the hearth, where Jessie Drayton stood with her dress pinned up, frying slices of bacon, when Willie came down in search of breakfast. She looked up from her work as he came in, with a laughing face, to which the fire had brought a bright, hot flush, and wished him a merry Christmas.

"A merry Christmas to you too, Jess, and a happy new year," Willie answered in response, and going over to where she stood, he stooped downwards and kissed her. "I have brought a new gown for my aunt, and a Christmas-box for you and Nellie, Jess," he said, standing by her on the hearth.

Then, as Nellie's footstep sounded along the passage, he took a parcel wrapped in silver paper from his pocket, and drawing out of it a pair of glittering bracelets, held them up before Jessie's surprised eyes, who snatching up the hissing pan from the fire, reached out her hand for the young man's showy gift.

"It was good of you to think upon us, Willie," she said with a grateful smile on her full ripe lips, while she turned the bracelets round and round in her hand, without attempting to draw them on her wrist. "Only I'm thinking they're too fine for working girls like me or Nellie. So if the man you got them from would take them back, and give us a nice dress or the like—"

But Willie interrupted her with a laugh.

"Jess, girl," he said, "jewellers don't sell dresses."

"They do down this way," Jessie persisted, still with an admiring eye on the bracelets, despite their uselessness. "There's a man goes through here once a fortnight with rings and brooches, and dresses too of all sorts."

"Ay, Brummagem jewellery!" Willie said contemptuously, a trifle nettled at his cousin's questioning acceptance of his gift.

"Well," she said, with a smile on her bonnie honest face, "I'll no scorn your present, Willie, but I'll lock it up, and keep it to wear at Nellie's wedding."

Drayton laughed, but though he laughed, he felt his face flame

hotly, as he followed the girl's smiling glance to where Nellie stood in the open doorway, watching the little scene between the cousins.

"You had best keep them for your own wedding," Nellie retorted, as she passed through the door, with a pout on her scarlet lips.

But Jessie only laughed, and said she had no chance of a wedding yet; while Nellie, with the pout upon her lip changing into smiles, held out her hand for Willie's offered present.

III.

WILLIE and the two girls walked together that day to Calthorpe Church by the road, as the snow lay too thickly on the meadow-path to allow of their taking the shorter route.

Coming out after service, they found stalwart Mark Wilton waiting for them in the churchyard, dressed in his homely Sunday best. He was to dine that day at the Oak farm by special invitation, and having joined the Draytons in the churchyard, he walked back to the farm with Nellie, taking his place at her side with a silent assumption of ownership, which made Will Drayton feel a trifle sulky; not that it had aught to do with him, as he told himself while he went with Jessie down the path leading to the church gates, only the girl was too dainty and pretty for such a rough giant as my lord's head keeper.

In honour of Christmas, dinner was served that day in the farm parlour, in place of the kitchen, where the family dined on ordinary occasions; and at dinner Wilton took his place by Nellie again, with the same air of ownership as had offended Willie on their way home from church.

"I suppose it's settled Wilton is to have Nellie for a wife, aunt?" Willie hazarded, when he and Jessie and Mrs. Drayton had come out after dinner into the kitchen; leaving Nellie and her lover sitting by the parlour fire.

"Yes, I suppose he is. They've settled it between them, and I'm content," Mrs. Drayton said quietly.

Something in Willie's voice when he asked the question, made Jessie look sharply up at him, and then glance away again into the fire: but nothing more was said on either side, and the talk drifted away to other things.

Late in the afternoon, when the Draytons were sitting down to tea, Tom Churton, an old Calthorpe friend of Willie's, dropped in to have a chat with him; and when Churton rose to leave, Willie volunteered to walk back with him to the village, whispering Jessie as he followed Churton out, that he would be back to say good-night to Mark before he left the farm. But when they reached Calthorpe, instead of letting him return as he meant to do when he started,

Willie was induced by his companion to come into the bar of Calthorpe Inn, and have something hot before walking back to the farm through the darkness and the driving snow which had begun to fall again. Talking in the lighted bar, and drinking his brandy and water, so beguiled Will Drayton into forgetfulness, that eleven o'clock had struck before he entered the yard gate of the Oak farm again, and saw to his dismay that all the lights in the house were out, and only a glimmering blaze from the kitchen fire gave a hope that any of the family were astir.

He knocked softly at the door, which was unbolted and opened as softly by Nellie Drayton, who crept back instantly within the warm circle of the fire.

Willie fastened the door behind him, and then taking off his hat, shook the white snow from it as he neared the hearth, where Nellie stood, looking silently down upon the blazing embers, while the glow of the burning wood shone on the silken glossiness of her hair, and lighted up the subtle softness of her eyes.

She turned to him as he approached with a little smiling nod, but her lips said nothing.

"So you are all alone, Nellie?" Willie began by way of breaking ground; for Nellie's little nod had a coy reticence in it, which lured Drayton more fatally than a freer welcome. "Where is my aunt and Jessie?"

Out of the mellow brown eyes shot a glance half smiling, half laughing, as she answered with demure gravity,

"They're gone to bed an hour ago; so if you want Jess, you won't be like to see her till to-morrow."

"But I don't particularly want Jess, Nellie."

She gave her head a coquettish little toss.

"How am I to understand your London ways of asking for people you don't want?" she said, looking away from Drayton's face into the fire.

There for a moment in the silence of the leaping firelight the two stood wordless, until Nellie raising her hand to brush the hair back from her forehead, the glitter of a golden bracelet on her uplifted wrist struck on the young man's delighted eyes.

"You're a brave little cousin, Nellie," Willie cried eagerly, "to wear my gift on your arm, instead of locking it in a box like Jessie."

Nellie's eyes fell on the gleaming bracelet on her left arm, and she half laughingly covered it over with her right hand.

"I only wore one to night," she said primly, half inclined to make play for herself with the young man's eagerness, yet half abashed and touched by it, "just to show it to a friend."

"Your friend was Mark Wilton, Nell," Willie suggested. "What might Mark have said, if it's a fair question?"

To this Nellie, twining the bracelet round, and looking at it wistfully, out of her drooped eyes, answered slowly :

"He said it was foolish finery for such as me, who was to be a working man's wife."

Was it the witchery of the purple firelight, or the girl's eyes, or her wistful downward look upon her present, which made Will Drayton blurt out unguardedly—

"Only say a word, Nell, and there will be no need for you to be a working man's wife."

But Nellie either did not or would not see the drift of her cousin's rash remark, and went on demurely :

"So Mark bid me give you your pretty present back, and tell you was too grand for a poor girl."

Willie's face flushed red.

"And do you mean to say you'll do it?" he asked sharply.

The downward eyes glanced upwards to his face.

"No, I said I wouldn't, because though your present was too good for me, I'd wear it now and again for sake of the kindness that made you give it."

"Even when you are Mark's wife?"

And when Willie put the question the soft eyes wavered in their glance, and a flush came to her cheek.

"Mother and Jessie like Mark," she said in guileful evasion. "He's steady and careful, and has some money put by, so they talk of his leaving my lord, and taking a farm and—and—"

Her confidence stammered and halted now, and Willie filled up her sentence.

"Marrying you and settling down in a home."

"Something like that, Willie; only I'm young yet, and it's time enow to think about it."

"And if another man came for you that my aunt and Jess liked as well as Mark, what would you do then, Nellie?"

But Nellie, instead of answering, looked from his eager eyes back again to the glowing wood fire.

"What would you do, Nellie?" he urged.

"There, I hear Jessie calling," she cried; "she'll say I'm a silly lass to stand here talking, instead of going to bed."

She slid by him into the passage leading to the stairs, but he followed her swiftly, and caught her hands.

"You never kissed me for my present, Nell," he said. "Will you kiss me now and say good-night?"

She drew her hands from his and pushed him from her, in half-laughing denial.

"How dare you be so bold, Willie?" she cried, and then with fleet foot she fled upstairs to the shelter of her room.

IV.

DECEMBER drifted into January, and still Willie Drayton said never a word of going back to London, seeming but too content to spend his time in the society of his cousin Nellie. Only her mother and Jess, he kept telling himself, were on Mark Wilton's side; he had no part or concern in Nellie's unbiassed affections. So, when the day's work was done, he sat by her in the glowing fire light talking of London, until the girl's head grew dazzled with the notion that to be the wife of Willie Drayton, and live in the great city where she might wear gold bracelets, and display a showy silk without word of comment, was to be almost, if not quite, a lady.

It was one thing to be the head keeper's wife, whom everyone called Mark, if they did not call him Wilton; but it was another thing to marry her cousin whom people always called Mr. Drayton, not daring to make too free with so well-dressed and prosperous a gentleman.

Nellie's foolish head went round in those days, when she dreamt dreams and saw visions, in a way she marvelled at later, when the glamour had faded.

She liked Wille's blue eyes and chesnut hair, his comely face and his town-bred ways, better than the homely, honest lover who had nothing in common with Willie's dandyism and fine clothes and gold watch-chain, all of which were so many snares in the way of foolish Nellie Drayton.

At first Nellie's flirtation was kept out of Wilton's ken, who came and went as usual, and from whom she stole moments to be given, when he was gone, to Willie Drayton. But as her zest for Willie's society strengthened, she grew careless and saucy to her old lover, and leaving him with her mother and Jessie for company, boldly went out of doors with her cousin, and, in the short winter gloaming, while the clasp of the old love was warm on her hand, yielded her lips to the kisses of the new.

"Nellie's only a bit dazed with Willie's talk about London," Mrs. Drayton would say excusingly, when she saw Wilton's look darken or his brow lower at Nellie's open defection.

But Wilton would answer never a word of complaint or reproach to mother or sister of the girl he loved so well. Only, as time went on, and Nellie grew more heedless of his silent patience, or his silent pain, he began coming less frequently to the Oak farm, a proceeding which very much disconcerted Miss Nellie, who was well-pleased to sit as queen between her two admirers.

"You're like to lose a good man with your giddy-headed nonsense, and I don't believe you care a pin for Will Drayton," Jessie said to

her, warningly. "It's only the folly of gold bracelets, and foolish bits of ribbon in your hair, that's lifting you off your feet."

For Nellie, not daring to wear Willie's bracelets every day, had taken instead to tie up her pretty brown hair with ribbons of blue and ribbons of scarlet, that Willie bought in the village for her adornment, and to which vanity of the flesh Jessie scornfully alluded. Whereupon Nellie laughed saucily, and told Jessie she liked Willie better than she liked Mark, to which Jessie impolitely responded that if she did she was a greater silly than she took her for.

"Maybe you'll take Mark yourself, when I'm gone up to London to be a lady?" Nellie suggested in reprisal.

"A lady!" Jessie echoed in pitying derision. "A fine lady you'll be in a London lodging, living on Will Drayton's weekly wages, which, it's my opinion, he can spend the bulk of on himself without a wife."

Upon which Nellie walked out of the kitchen to the dairy, with her head in the air, full of the flattering notion that Jessie was jealous of her coming good fortune. But when the cream was churned, and her deft little hands were busy with the butter, the memory of the old honest love, on which she had leant from childhood, came back to her regretfully, and stood beside the gilded shadow of a passion less real and less true.

Yet, when evening came, and she strolled into the farm kitchen after a walk with Willie Drayton, wearing Willie's ribbons in her hair, and a knot of Willie's buying at her throat, the flitting regret had vanished, and the light of the new love shining in her mellow eyes of brown had killed the light of the old.

As January closed in, Mark Wilton's dropping visits to the farm had ceased totally. At first Mrs. Drayton bemoaned his absence with Jessie, but grew reconciled, when she saw Nellie so taken up with her new lover and the notion of the fine-lady life she was to lead in London, where she was to have nothing to do, only to dress and go out with Willie when his day's work was over. Drayton had no true appreciation of the pleasures of home, and filled Nellie's head with the idea of theatres, and Christy Minstrels, and summer afternoons at Kew or Richmond, never pausing to think that the salary he usually spent on his personal enjoyment, might not afford the same delightful recreations to two.

Looking at Willie's picture of their town life, in its gilded setting, one cold February afternoon, while he was absent in the village, and her hands were busy washing up the cups after their early tea, Nellie was startled out of her day-dream by a shadow falling athwart the open doorway. Glancing up she saw the stalwart figure of Mark Wilton entering the kitchen, carrying his gun in his hand, and bending his head as she had seen him bend it many a time under the

low old-fashioned entrance. The scarlet blood flew hot to Nellie's cheek.

"You frightened me with that gun, Mark," she said, in excuse for the tide which would not be stayed, although the small plump hands, busy amongst the teacups, never faltered in their work.

"There's no need to be frightened," he said, "it's not loaded; though for all that I shouldn't have brought it here, but I carry it about with me for company like, because it's the only company I've got now."

There was a world of reproach in his voice, a world of pathos in the simple sentence, to which he added no word, but ground his gun upon the floor, and clasping his strong brown hands over the muzzle, stood looking into the girl's face silently.

"Mother and Jessie are gone a-milking," Nellie said, forcing herself to say something, and looking down at a teacup she held in her fingers, rather than into the eyes fixed on her across the brown hands clasped upon the gun.

"I just came to have a word with you, Nellie," Wilton said, not noticing her remark about her mother and Jessie. "And if you don't mind listening to me a minute, I'd like to say it here."

She made no answer, and Mark, lifting his large hands away from the muzzle of the gun, laid it in the corner of the kitchen.

There was not much romance about Mark Wilton, nor any show of sentiment; yet what he had to say to Nellie he wished to say there, in the crimson glow of the firelight, where he had told her of his love nearly a year ago. "Where it began, let it end," he said to himself. Then he crossed the kitchen, and standing before Nellie on the hearth, he spoke.

"They be talking down in the village about your marrying Will Drayton, and I just came up to hear the truth of it, Nellie, from your own lips."

But with scarlet cheek, and drooping eye, Nellie stood still, without answering him.

"Silence is the same as words sometimes," Mark proceeded after a moment; "and all I have to say now, Nell, my lass, is, that if you are going to marry Will Drayton, and want the promise you made me back, I'm here to give it to you."

"There's no hurry about it, Mark," Nellie said nervously, "and—and—I'd rather you'd speak to mother."

"Your mother has never come between us two yet, and she won't now," Mark answered with quiet decision. "But Nell, my girl, if so be you want your promise, take it to-night, for maybe when the time comes when you do want it, I mightn't be here to give it."

Nellie felt startled although she made no sign, but stood with her head drooped, and her eyes wandering from the scattered tea-things on the table to the flitting gleams of the fire.

"You see I thought there was no use staying in these parts any longer," he went on. "I got to dislike the place when I stopped coming up here, so I gave my lord notice a month ago, and as a brother of mine has a farm in Gloucestershire, and I mean to turn farmer too, I thought I might as well shift for good, and I'm going down there to-morrow, to see if I can find a farm near his."

"You've been so far away from us this month back, Gloucestershire won't be much farther," Nellie answered, with a coolness which struck Mark sorely; but he only said,

"I thought if you wanted me any nearer, you'd have sent for me, Nellie."

"The man who goes away of himself is not worth sending for," Nellie retorted, taking, with a woman's ready tact, the part of the injured and deserted.

"Nellie, it's not fair to say words like them, when you know I went because I didn't want to stand in the way of a man you liked better nor you liked me. And I thought to myself, if it's only a girl's fancy and pride she has out of him, as Jessie says it is, why she'll tell me to come back; but I never had a word, nor a look, so I made up my mind to go clear away; and as you were only a child, Nell, when you gave me your word first, I thought I'd ask you before I went, if you'd wish it back again."

But the half-stilled passion, or the deep pathos of Wilton's words, struck no answering chord in Nellie. She was waxing angry now, angry with herself, while she thought she was angry with Mark.

"You say right when you tell me I was a child a year ago, when I said I would be your wife," she cried, a light flashing into her usually mellow eyes; "but I'm a woman to-night, and I'll take my promise back."

"Nell, my lass, don't let our last words be words of anger," he said. "I'm not like to see you any more after to-night, for I'd never wish to look upon your face when you were another man's wife. But you might just let me kiss you once before I go; once, for sake of the time that can come no more."

He came nearer to her while he spoke, nearer yet, and the ruddy gleams of the fire were lighting up the two figures standing on the hearth, when Nellie, bowed a little, and softened, turned her face to his—her cheek, but not her lips—and then, without spoken word, she slid away from the kitchen, and along the passage to her room, as though the kiss itself was the seal of their farewell.

* * * * *

It was close upon eight o'clock when Wilton left the Oak farm kitchen that night, where he had sat alone after Nellie left him, waiting to say farewell to Jessie and Mrs. Drayton, when they came in from milking, and to give them a last hand-shake before he went to where their lives and his should lie apart for ever.

As he passed from the house porch, he paused a moment to take a last, lingering look at Nellie's window, wondering to himself if she watched his going; or was she sitting up yonder waiting for Will Drayton to come back from Calthorpe? when from the shadow of the porch a hand stole out and touched his shoulder timorously.

The touch made him turn, and as he turned, he saw looking upwards at him, out of the shadowy darkness of the night, the small winsome face of Nellie Drayton.

"Mark, would you stay in Calthorpe if I asked you?" she said with a quivering lip, and tears trembling in her mellow eyes.

He answered no word, but for all answer took her to him and kissed her, while her clinging arms wound themselves round his neck.

"And if you will," she whispered, "I'll give back the promise I took away to-night; for Jess was right, Mark, and the old love is stronger than the new."

H. BOUVERIE PIGOTT.

IN THESE HARD TIMES.

It is not often that the general public, counted by thousands, get as *direct* a glimpse of the small emotions which go on behind the respectable window-blinds in good streets as it is in my power to open up to the readers of this Magazine. We all of us know, in a more or less vague, more or less picturesque shape, the actual seamy side of the respectabilities; we read plenty about it in novels and newspaper articles; and we hear it rebuked, though usually in a false and feeble way, in homilies, lectures, and essays, but here is a bit of it, all alive and piping hot,—if the metaphor will hold. About ten years ago I picked up in the streets the lady's letter I am now going to copy word for word, except as to names of persons and places and certain descriptive phrases which would let the cat out of the bag. These I have more than altered, I have totally departed from them; because even such quasi-equivalents as a novelist uses when he says Darkshire for Lancashire, Hopshire for Kent, Loamshire for Warwickshire, or Stonyshire for Oxfordshire, might furnish a clue to the persons concerned. And of course the finder of a letter dropped by accident must treat it as tenderly. In only one other respect have I altered this unpleasantly instructive, though in some respects pathetic letter,—I have punctuated it, and corrected the spelling of one word. In the original there is not a stop, great or small, from beginning to end, not a dash, nor a gap, nor the ghost of one—in fact the letter is absolutely without grammatical rhythm. It was no doubt dropped by the lady to whom it was addressed, or her husband, and it had been a good deal thumbed and read:—

“THE HURST, HARROW-ON-THE-HILL, MIDDLESEX.
May 31st.

“MY DEAREST JANE,

“I have been unable to get to you to tell you of the change that has come o'er the spirit of my dream, for my time has been all taken up by disagreeables. In the first place, we felt we were going smash, and fearing all our things would be taken from us, we have left our house, and sold most of our things. I really know not what we should have done had it not been for Mr. Johnson. I went down to him almost heart-broken, for I thought there would be no hope for us, being so much involved. We had determined to sell our things, and when we had paid we should have been left without a

penny, and without a home. Poor Mr. Johnson gave me 00L., and has given us one of his houses in Blank-Blank, rent-free. We cannot go there until the end of June, as there is some one in it at present. I am only going to keep one servant, and, therefore, I hope in time we shall get one" (get on?) "How I wish, darling, you had chanced to have gone to the Blank District" (*i.e.*, where the rent-free house is). "I shall be so lonely! Algernon" (evidently the writer's husband,) "has taken an office at Blank's, No. 00, Blank Street, Blank, and they give him a great deal of business. Give my affectionate love to Charles" (the husband of the lady addressed, no doubt,) "and tell him to go and see him, but perhaps he had better not say I have written you so fully. I need not tell you not to mention anything about us to any one, as I suppose no one will be much aware of our come-down. I shall never see anyone, and you may be sure Algernon will keep up appearances. Karl and Lizzy have taken us all in, and are very kind. I think before we go to our new house I shall get you to take Algernon, baby, and me, for a week, darling, if you think you can manage for us, but not to make you uncomfortable. How are all your darlings? Kiss them and give them their poor aunty's love. How are you getting on with money affairs? Better, dearest, I hope. Do write and tell me all about yourself! And now, God bless you, darling Jane, and, with fond love, Believe me, your affectionately attached sister, Caroline Johnson." (This looks as if the Mr. Johnson, who gave the money and the house rent-free, were the writer's father-in-law,—Algernon's father). "Don't give any one Algernon's address. I am going to write to Papa, but I shall make out that we have left our house because Algernon has got an appointment as . . . to (Blank's) and they wished him to have an office in the house, and therefore I should prefer having a cottage a little way from town. I say this, darling, as I don't want the Chattertons to know anything about it, and in this way they will think we have got *up* in the world instead of *down*; for I shall never go near them when I am at Blank" (in the rent-free house). "I suppose you know they have *bought* a house in *Blank Terrace*."

Here ends the letter, and how thoroughly characteristic it is of the ordinary middle-class Englishwoman! How truly feminine in its ellipses! "I need not tell you not to mention anything about us to any one—" here, you must, in order to make sense, supply a lot of words,—for if *you* hold *your* tongue, we shall keep our misfortune secret; "as I suppose no one will be much aware of our come-down." We may perhaps look leniently upon the small deception practised by the lady upon her father—because she so readily assumes her sister's assent to it that we may suppose he was ill or overdone with anxieties of his own; or perhaps he had opposed Caroline's marriage, and Jane did not choose to let down her lord a single peg in *his*

eyes. But what empty-headedness and empty-heartedness there seems to be in the reference to the Chattertons. As they have been actually buying a house in a nice neighbourhood, they must be made to think Algernon and Caroline have gone up instead coming down. "I shall never go near them when I am at Blank." Now the rent-free house was, I may inform the reader, twenty odd miles nearer to the Chattertons' place than the one from which Algernon and the lady had fled—so there was no apparent reason of distance for breaking the connection. Either Jane cared for the Chattertons before, or she did not. If she did not, why visit then? If she did, nothing but false pride would stand in the way now. The probability is that here was a visiting friendship founded on false pride in the first instance, and now broken off for a similar reason. There are other touches in the letter which are less agreeable still. "Karl and Lizzy have taken us all in and are very kind"—and then comes the request to dearest Jane to take them in too. This looks like a woman's indirect way of putting on the moral screw, *q. d.*; "So-and-so have been very kind, and therefore *you* can't in decency refuse us." Again, I don't quite like Caroline's question about Jane's money matters. That also has a sort of moral-screw look with it, *q. d.*; "How about *your* troubles? you know *you* may want a bit of help some day." All this, and much more, which occurs to me and will perhaps occur to the reader, especially if a woman—may be judging harsh judgment; but it certainly looks as if it would be difficult to judge too harshly (in these particulars) of a sister, who on so serious an occasion, could write so empty-headed a letter,—a letter with nothing but respectability and respectable self-pity in it from beginning to end. Not one word of strong emotion,—not a hint of regret for the position in which any of the creditors were placed,—not a glimpse of the moral sensibility proper to such a situation. Here, however, we may give the lady the benefit of a doubt—it is possible that Algernon's misconduct may have been at the bottom of the "smash," and a lady whose mental resources did not enable her to write a better letter than that may have been at a loss how to express collateral regrets in such a way as to avoid oblique reflections upon her husband. I confess, however, it reads to me like simply an empty letter; such as Amelia Osborn might have written if you had taken two-thirds of her heart away.

It is an old story. Mr. Walter Bagehot, a writer who is far more in harmony with the more recent forms of progress than the writer of these lines can pretend to be, has lately quoted, and without answering it in the affirmative, the dreary question whether all that human invention has accomplished has yet lightened by one half-hour the labour of a single human being. And we might well ask whether the woman who can write a letter like this has got one half-hour in advance of the savage mentioned by Sir John Lubbock, who burst

into tears because some one threw a little flour over his cloak. It has been said that the Englishman who has come to the end of his ledger is the most abject being on the face of the earth. But even if he is, let us be just : to him and to his squaw. In a commercial country, for a man to be at the end of his ledger is to be on the brink of starvation, unless he is to depend upon others for food and shelter. So he may well look sad for a while. And for a woman to be compelled suddenly to put off her ornaments and part with the elegancies to which she has been accustomed, is like a queen's having to abdicate ; or, worse, like a beauty's losing her eyelashes or having to sell her hair. That is to say, it is so in proportion to her capacity of feeling it so. But, unfortunately for the force of these suggestions towards palliating the cowardice of Respectability, we find that where there is any such capacity as we have spoken of, there is another capacity also. The man who, having come to the end of his ledger, feels it for what it really is, is sure to be capable of falling back upon the essential morality of the situation and getting out of that the means of conquering all vulgar shame. And the woman who, being obliged to give up any of the minor elegancies of life, is capable of regretting them for what they really are, is sure to be capable of supplying their place out of her own resources, and she, too, is above all vulgar shame. A sense of pain, often bringing blushes with it no doubt, must accompany what this poor lady calls a "come-down" in life, and, in such a case, a certain degree of reserve is natural. But the meaner forms of the regrets of respectability are among the things which tend to make us, according to an old formula, "ashamed of our species." Indeed, if what some naturalists told us were true, there would be reason for this shame ; for they say that the base instinct which leads so many of us to persecute those who are different, and the cowardice which is the counterpart of this shame, are remnants of a time when we were four-footed beasts of prey ; when every act of originality on the part of any member of the herd was a danger-signal, and every weak member a burden as well as a danger.

There are natural reasons for some degree of social reserve and bashfulness in the case of a reverse of fortune,—whether we are to blame for it or not. Some degree of retirement is natural to misfortune ; because, among other reasons, all pain wants a little nursing ; because reticence is favourable to that husbanding of the strength which misfortune makes necessary ; and because self-respect teaches us to avoid insult by drawing back a little till we see how others take things. But nothing can be more abject than the position taken up by many persons who have been beaten in the race of respectability. That they valued any elegancies which they now have to give up simply as things of show, and not as helps to a sweeter life, they soon make clear by exhibiting more regret for the loss of the fine things than of

the beautiful ones, and above all, by showing an utter incapacity to make an elegant life for themselves. True, these things have been said so often that it is almost tedious to say them over again ; but in these times, if ever, a repetition of them may be tolerated. A life need not immediately become sordid because it is stripped of much of such ornament as the upholsterer and dress-maker can provide for it. A person of an elegant mind can put suggestions of culture and refinement into what are called "poor surroundings." A woman who has learnt—as every woman should learn—to make her own dresses can get on wonderfully well without the dress-maker. And a man who can put up wall-paper, make picture-frames, and do other things that belong to the ornamenting of life, can do without much help from the upholsterer and his myrmidons. And both the lady and the gentleman will find a keen pleasure in being free from trade tyranny. Dress-makers, tailors, furniture-folk, paper-hangers, and the working-man in general, are as tyrannical as they are usually ignorant ; and they all think it scorn to make the best of small and poor materials. In fact, they deliberately and contemptuously "scamp" the workmanship, if the material and the occasion altogether are not up to their notions of the dignity of their craft.

Domestic servants, as a rule, are still worse. Except in very rare cases, it is they who are among the first and worst hindrances to economy in the household. A housemaid now-a-days will almost give notice on the spot if you go about to show her how to save coals ; or if you retrench in any article as to which she regards a certain standard as essential to respectability. True, the majority of the mistresses are, in proportion to their lights and opportunities, just as bad : but that does not mend matters. In a recent talk which I had with a lady of high culture and faculties, she expressed a hope that the present dearth of good or even tolerable female servants would have at least the one good effect of driving some mistresses to occupy themselves in household work, which would be a fine thing for their health and otherwise. This would not hold in all cases. Where there are young children and the parents are wise enough to educate them at home, their training must occupy so much of the mother's time that she can do little but superintend in the household. Besides, in order to teach the children properly she must keep up her own culture, which implies a good deal of reading. And then, again, in a case where the children were taught at home, the head of the household would, probably, be a man of culture, and for his sake the mistress must keep pace with him in certain matters, as far as possible. Indeed, for more than his sake, as we shall see in a moment. But that mistresses would find it conduce to economy and genuine respectability if they were to do more of the household work themselves is certain. Only it must be begun in good time : that is, the mistress must be distinctly *before-hand* with the maid, or there

will be a struggle for empire, in which, in these days, the maid will probably get the best of it ;—to say nothing of the unpleasantness of struggles in general. And, madame, a word in your ear. You do not like a lady to have coarse red hands? Nor do I. So be sure to wear gloves. But the shape and fullness of the arm and shoulder, and even of the bust, are, as a rule, improved by much more active use of the upper limbs than most ladies indulge in. I am not making out a case, I am speaking well-known facts ; and, madame, even if your hand should a little increase in size, as in the course of years it no doubt would, yet if you ask artists and men of genius in general what they have to say about the hand, you will find that the change is nothing to regret ; while if it were you would have much to set off against it,—a firm-fleshed, well-rounded shoulder, and a well-opened bust.

But the truth is, something remains behind. No scheme of household economy can be effectually carried out unless the husband and wife do, in old-fashioned phrase, pull together. And how often do they? Why, on the contrary, they have usually quite separate "spheres ;" and this, also, is a part of that regimen of imitation which is a stronghold of many mischiefs. The husband is to be the "winner," the wife the spender : and that is too often supposed to settle the matter. A city missionary once told me, what I well knew, that among the very poor a husband who beats his wife a little is better thought of than one who dares to interfere with her spending of the money ; and, among all classes, there is a superstitious division of "spheres," even where there are not separate purses or an "allowance" to the wife for housekeeping. But economy, and certainly economy with kindly and tasteful management, cannot be had upon these terms. Monsieur and madame must pull together, and no division of "spheres" must be known in the family council. The husband will do certain things, and the wife certain other things, and these will inevitably follow certain old-world lines. But we *must* break the tradition which dates from the times when the wife's sticking the knife into an empty trencher at breakfast was the signal for the men to take horse and hunt the boar and deer. If Omphale wants help, and Hercules can do her work, let him, whatever the work may be. In point of fact, women servants now do a great many things that no woman ought to do : scrubbing, the hard part of the washing, shoe-cleaning, and worse. Leigh Hunt at sixty-five told Hawthorne that, not being able to keep a boy servant, he cleaned his own boots. And why should not a man make beds? It is of the very utmost consequence that boys, as well as girls, though not in the same degree, should have the training which comes of being made "handy" in the house ; and there is something so utterly ridiculous in the idea of a woman having an inalienable right to make tea (whether she makes it weak or strong, well or ill), or to

apportion all the minor expenses without concert, that if we were not the slaves of use and wont, we should laugh at it. No : husband and wife must pull together. Of course certain conditions are essential to their doing so. First, they must love each other, and second, they must have brains. If you can first catch your hare in these particulars, you may proceed to cook it. As a rule, the man is more inventive than the woman ; at the least, he has seen more and read more ; and he can often suggest economies that never would occur to a woman. But a woman must have brains before she will allow him to do much in "the woman's sphere," and perhaps nine out of ten wives, or a larger proportion still, would sneer to see a man, drawing-pencil in hands, elaborately suggesting the cut of an article of female dress, or pointing out a way of economising the stuff ; or discussing how a poor material could be made to yield a good and pretty result.

There are many more things to say ; but they naturally connect themselves with larger topics. Thus much may perhaps be excused in times when "the unprecedented and astonishing prosperity of the country" means increased dearness of living to nearly all of us ; when, under a "liberal" government, the powers that be do their best to increase our burdens by insolent arbitrariness in assessing the household duties and other taxes, and still more insolent harshness in getting in taxes of all kinds,—and when, besides, the "astonishing prosperity" which has the astonishing effect of making us poorer, is attended with circumstances that promise an early and awful collapse. Certainly, all literary men are concerned in the matter. To my questions as to the sale of certain periodicals—the new edition of Messrs. Chambers's admirable "Information" was one of them—the bookseller answered gloomily, "It's a bad trade now, sir, mine is—books are lux'ries, and they're the first thing people knock off when it goes hard with 'em." At least those with whom they are about the last may have their grumble.

MATTHEW BROWNE.

THE LAST NEWS FROM ST. STEPHEN'S.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IF I WERE DICTATOR."

As I was strolling the other day about the labyrinth of courts and buildings which belong to the new Houses of Parliament, I happened to see a small door in a corner so dark and obscure that it seemed purposely placed there to escape the notice of ordinary passers-by. Observing however that there was some inscription over it, I stepped up to it and read in very small old English characters:—

School for Members.

"School for Members!" said I. "This must be something new, and I'll see what it is."

Accordingly as the door was partly open I stepped inside and found myself in a large room surrounded by desks of carved oak, at which were seated twenty or thirty gentlemen, most of whom I recognised as members of the Upper or Lower House. They were so intent on some documents, each at his own desk, that they did not notice my entrance: but, when I was about to retire more puzzled than before, a tall grave old gentleman with long white hair and very keen eyes stepped up to me from one side.

"A member, I presume, sir?" he asked, with a slight foreign accent. "And you wish to be my pupil?"

I explained that I had not the honour to be a member of either House, and was only brought there by curiosity.

"Ah, well," he replied courteously, "I will gratify your curiosity then, if you will come this way—Mr. Forster, you are talking as usual, instead of minding your work. Come here, sir" (to me).

He led me therefore up to his own desk, which was raised a step or two above the others and a little apart from them, so that we could converse in a low tone without disturbing any one.

"Now first your curiosity must learn my name—there is my card," he said; and on glancing at the bit of pasteboard, I saw:—

Dr. O'Hightliffe,

Professor of Eloquence.

"From that you will guess what we are doing," he went on. "Yes, I am teaching these gentlemen to talk better. My humble efforts in improving the debates of foreign legislatures have been considered so successful that I have been invited to London, and have already, as you see, got a good many pupils."

"But I see several of our greatest orators here, sir—Mr. Gladstone, for instance, and Mr. Horsman," said I, in wonder: "surely you do not think you can make *them* speak any better?"

"Bah! you shall see," he replied impatiently. "Come now, tell me—one of your great debates that fills three or four pages of your *Times* with the smallest of small print and runs over into the supplement—how much do you read of it next morning?"

"Well, I generally glance my eye down the columns, and read the sentences where I see there have been 'laughter' and 'cheers.'"

"Ah, just so,—you read only the good bits. Now my plan is to make my pupils say nothing but the good bits. None of them shall speak longer than half an hour, and each sentence shall have a Thought in it. So I hope soon to reduce the length of a debate to three columns at most, but every word of it worth reading."

"Then I think, sir," said I, "you will deserve a statue from the newspaper proprietors for the expense you will save them in reporting."

"Yes, and from their readers, because the papers will no longer be filled with uninteresting matter. And from the members themselves, who will not only find themselves read, but be able to get home to dinner every evening at eight. Surely four hours is enough for speechifying. Oh, yes, if they will listen to me, they shall have a comfortable dinner, and save their sleep, health, and temper."

"But by what possible plan do you hope to work these miracles?" I asked.

"I will show you," he replied. "I devote this room to the study of *brevity*, and each of these gentlemen is engaged in shortening some recent speech of an intimate friend or colleague, which is afterwards read in class, both the old and amended version. For instance, Mr. Lowe yonder is cutting down one of Mr. Gladstone's last orations, full of magnificent verbiage and of that 'linked sweetness long drawn out,' which your poet speaks of—"

"Dear me, and how Mr. Lowe does seem to be enjoying his work!" I remarked.

"Ah, they all like this part of the business amazingly—the fun of showing up a dear friend is irresistible," replied the Professor, smiling. "But they don't like it so well when their own speeches, reduced perhaps by two-thirds of their length, but marvellously improved in clearness and force, are read out amid the laughter and criticisms of the class. However, they will take care not to be so long-winded hereafter, I imagine."

"Well, sir," he continued, "this want of brevity is the grand,

the fatal want in all your parliamentary speeches, and therefore, as I said, I devote my largest room to it. But on each side you see doors which lead to smaller apartments. In the three on the right, are students to whom I am teaching special parts of eloquence in which they are deficient; in the four on the left, are those who have some special fault to correct. But you shall peep into each in turn, and then you will be able to tell all Professor O'Mightitbe's secrets."

Accordingly, following the Professor, I examined the three apartments, or cells (for they were little larger), which were on the right. Over the door of each, for the convenience of the students, is written the special excellence taught there. The first, devoted to **The Art of Graceful Action**, had its walls covered with plate-glass mirrors, and here was a very corpulent and dumpy member, whose name I did not know, but who is an authority I believe on the important subject of weights and measures. With the praiseworthy view of getting out of the ordinary signal-post attitude of English orators, the ambitious little dumpling had been straddling about for the last hour practising pretty postures before the mirrors, and was now (an amusing sight!) stamping, gesticulating, and declaiming in the very height of a furious harangue to himself. In the next cell, where **The Art of being Witty** is taught, there was also only one student, viz., Mr. Newdegate, who with the air of chief mourner at his mother's funeral, was labouring hard at making jokes—on some principle, no doubt, like that indicated by Sydney Smith of facetious memory.

"Ah, if his success were but equal to his perseverance!" whispered the Professor, with a melancholy shake of the head as he surveyed Mr. Newdegate. "But I shall take other means with him soon. I shall put Mr. Bernal Osborne in the cell with him, because I thoroughly believe that jests are catching."

As both these pupils seemed so intent on their work, we did not disturb them, but entered the third apartment, over which was printed, **The Art of being Silent when you have Nothing to Say**. In this room were six or seven gentlemen, whom I remembered as being distinguished last session rather by the number than the excellence of their speeches; most of them having spoken between one and two hundred times. As might be expected from their loquacious disposition, they all looked rather sulky now; for in this room the strictest silence is enforced, under penalty of a guinea fine for each word they speak.* But their occupation surprised me: for each of them had Hansard and a case of printer's type before him, and was setting up one of his own old speeches, just like an ordinary compositor.

"Professor," angrily exclaimed one of these gentlemen as we

* The fines go, I believe, to the Deaf and Dumb Asylum.

entered, "I don't know what you mean, setting us to this beastly work. If I had known——."

"Excuse me, Mr. C.,—I think you are forgetting our rule about the fines," interrupted the Professor, very blandly, and taking out his note-book, where he jotted down a memorandum in pencil. "Let me see—there were seventeen words, I think. There, I have booked it—'Mr. C., seventeen guineas.' A good day for the Asylum!"

Mr. C. turned furiously to his work without uttering another of these expensive words, and after a brief look round we left the room.

"But, Professor," I said, "I am as much puzzled about this as Mr. C. is. How can setting their own speeches in type teach these gentlemen the virtue of Silence?"

"From the unpleasant labour it entails," replied my new acquaintance. "When they have themselves to pick out of a number of compartments every several letter they have employed, and to put this in its place, and to space the words and the lines, and all the rest of it—after three or four days' labour in setting up a single commonplace speech, they begin, if they have a grain of sense or of shame, to feel practically what a quantity of unnecessary trouble they have caused the compositors. And as we use none but large type, admitting only about five words in the line, they can scarcely help seeing for themselves how far the eye has to wander before it reaches even the smallest modicum of thought. So sometimes they do ask themselves, 'Was it worth while taking all this space and giving all this trouble to say so little?' But, indeed, sir," he added with a sigh, "these confirmed talkers are the worst cases I have—only one in four is ever cured."

"Well, your remedy is at any rate an ingenious one," I replied. "But pardon one other question. I cannot understand how you can induce all these elderly gentlemen to do such disagreeable things, even for their own good."

"Ah, I receive no man as my pupil unless he first binds himself on his honour to do for three months whatever I require. Then I judge for myself what are his deficiencies, without consulting his wishes at all. Ha, ha, if they had their own wishes, why, they would all be learning graceful action or to be witty, like poor Mr. Newdegate. But they will improve, you will see—in two months your debates will be better."

"Plenty of room for improvement," said I.

Crossing the large room we now proceeded to the four doors opposite, where different faults were in process of correction. The first room on this side, which was marked *The Florid Style*, had no occupant but Mr. Disraeli, who, on my companion's entrance, showed him a paper containing a number of glowing Hebraisms and bits of alliterative lacquer-work, which he had been selecting at the Professor's

request from "Lothair." Even my own very sober eye was caught by some bits of this tempting tinsel, and, as specimens, I trust there is no harm in mentioning them, with their equivalents in English :

"The radiant daughters of the house" (viz., some young ladies)—"Her fair cheek was sealed with the gracious approbation of majesty" (i.e. the Queen kissed her).—"Royalty, followed by the imperial presence of ambassadors, and escorted by a group of dazzling duchesses and paladins of high degree, was escorted with courteous pomp," &c. (i.e. the Queen with the ambassadors and nobility went to supper).—"Every one seemed to be speaking with bated breath . . . It was the supper hour" (i.e. their mouths were probably too full to talk).—"Bond Street, which seems to cap the climax of civilization" (a street which is a cap to the ladder of an abstraction can be nothing else than a fool's cap, one would think).—"When they asked their pretty questions, roses seemed to drop from their lips, and sometimes diamonds," (no equivalent in English).

I observed that, with a weakness common in the tutorial race, the Professor devoted more time to Mr. Disraeli than to half-a-dozen less promising pupils. Presently, however, we proceeded to the two next cells, devoted to ~~Ober-Politeness~~ and ~~Ober-Bluntness~~ respectively.

As we approached the first of these, I heard a continued low growl, interspersed with savage snarls, and now and then a gentle coaxing voice, like that of a man trying to soothe a ferocious dog. On opening the door, the first thing I saw was a fierce bull-mastiff, evidently keeping strict guard over it. When he saw the Professor, however, he ceased growling, gave a half-wag of his tail, and subsided under a chair, leaving the way clear for a gentleman who now emerged from the farther end of the apartment, and who turned out to be Lord Granville.

"My dear Professor, I am delighted to see you—delighted, I'm sure," he said, laughing. "You remember you promised to try and get me out of my suave method this morning? Well—do you know?—I've been coming to you these three hours, to know what you wished me to do, only—a most absurd thing—this wretched dog, that you said would be good company for me, positively took post by the door, and would not let me pass at all."

"I hope you tried the 'suave method' on him?" said the Professor, laughing also.

"Oh, dear, yes; I have been trying to coax and soothe him all the time, but he is a sad brute. At every 'poor fellow,' or 'good dog,' he gives a snarl, and the more kindly I speak to him, the louder he growls. And whenever I at all approached the door, he was positively furious; so that I have really been cowering in yon corner all the time. At last I fairly lost my temper—"

"I am delighted to hear it, my lord," interrupted the Professor; "there is hope for you yet."

"Well, I made a push for the door two or three times, and then he bit me—the brute!—and so forced me back into my corner."

"Ah, it was then that you swore, I suppose?" said the Professor. "I was rejoiced to hear you give vent to three right-down good mouth-filling oaths within the last half-hour. That shows decided improvement, does not it?"

"You heard me? How?" asked Lord Granville, in surprise.

"Oh, there is a tube from this cell to my desk, so that I heard every sound you made."

"Then, my dear sir, you intended all this, and put the dog into the room on purpose!"

"Certainly, my lord, and you could not have had a better lesson," answered the Professor. "Depend upon it, within a month or two, by Tartar's help, we shall get your spirit and temper up to a reasonable point. Well, you are tired now; but be sure to come and see Tartar again to-morrow."

The next cell, devoted to **Ober-Bluntness**, was empty, though it had been occupied that morning by a member of the government, rather conspicuous for this failing. He had left in a huff, however, when he heard the severe remedies which O'Mightitbe proposed.

"Poor fellow," remarked the Professor, "that contentious domineering spirit of his will be very hard to cure. But though he would not stop, I did the best for him I could—I advised him always before leaving his house to discharge his quarrelsome temper on his wife, or some poor secretary kept for the purpose—a method far less dangerous than venting it on deputations or his fellow-members, who are by no means safe lightning-conductors."

The fourth and last apartment was occupied by three or four gentlemen who are haunted by **Fixed Ideas**. The patients here are fastened each in his own chair, and encouraged to talk freely to each other. But whenever any one of them pronounces the word which is at the root of his monomania—say the "Pope," or the "Claimant,"—he instantly, by a most ingenious and self-acting contrivance which the Professor has patented, receives a violent cold *douche* from the roof. As there is no escape till the three hours are up, the most vehement soon learn under this treatment to avoid entirely the subject which was previously never off their lips.

"Now, sir, you have seen all Bluebeard's chambers," said the Professor, smiling, "and I have nothing more to tell you, except that once a week I give all these students of mine an examination paper on the art of statesmanship. Here is my last week's paper—take one and look at it—oh, take half-a-dozen copies, and distribute them among your friends. I want my school to be known, and all the members to come or be sent to it."

Taking a few of the printed papers with me, therefore, I thanked the Professor and bade him good morning. Strange as some of his methods seem, I certainly came away with the impression that such a school for members of the legislature might be very useful, and

had long been needed. And I am not without hope that he may cause even during the present session a considerable improvement in our parliamentary debates.

That my account of this novel institution may be complete, I will append *verbatim* the examination paper which the Professor gave me.

THE ART OF STATESMANSHIP. No. 3.

1. Distinguish between Statesmen, and members who have no views beyond *c. s. d.*, or parish politics, or the interests of their class, their borough, and themselves.

2. Is it absolutely necessary that the Opposition should always, and as a matter of course, resist all measures proposed by the Government, however excellent or however much needed such measures may be?

3. Could not friendly consultations for the quicker despatch of needful measures be arranged between the leaders of the Government and the Opposition? And if the interests of Party forbid such consultations while the interests of the State require them, which of these interests ought, in your opinion, to give way?

4. Compare Mr. Whalley with Demosthenes.

5. How can you best avoid answering an inconvenient question? Explain the *pros* and *cons* of each of the following modes of doing it: viz. the Gladstonian, by a cloud of words—the shillelagh brusqueness of Mr. Ayrton—the polite sneer of Mr. Lowe—and the simple method, by refusing to understand.

6. Give instances from actual debates of the three following ways of making your speech interesting: (*a*) by the excellence of the subject matter, (*b*) by personalities, (*c*) by making a fool of yourself. Which of these ways is the easiest?

"BRING ME WORD HOW TALL SHE IS."

Twelfth Night ; or, What you Will.

"How tall is your Rosalind?"

"Just as high as my heart."

As You Like it.

I.

WITHIN a garden shade,
A garden sweet and dim,
Two happy children played
Together ; he was made
For God, and she for him.

II.

Beyond the garden's shade,
In deserts drear and dim,
Two outcast children strayed
Together, he betrayed
By her, and she by him.

III.

Together, girl and boy,¹
They wandered, ne'er apart ;
Each wrought to each annoy,
Yet each knew never joy
Save in the other's heart.

IV.

By her so oft deceived ;
By him so sore oppress ;
They each the other grieved,
Yet each of each was best
Beloved, and still caressed.

V.

And she was in his sight
Found fairest, still his prize,
His constant chief delight ;
She raised to him her eyes
That led her not aright,

VI.

And ever by his side
A patient huntress ran
Through forests dark and wide,
And still the woman's pride
And glory, was the Man.

VII.

When her he would despise,
She kept him captive bound ;
Forbidding her to rise,
By many cords and ties
She held him to the ground.

VIII.

At length, in stature grown,
He stands erect and free ;
Yet stands he not alone,
For his beloved would be
Like him she loveth wise, like him she loveth free.

IX.

So wins she her desire,
Yet stand they not apart ;
For as *she* doth aspire
He grows, nor stands she higher
Than her Beloved's heart.

1872.

DORA GREENWELL.

THE BALLET.

COLOUR, light, music, agility and grace—when all these are seen combined in a ballet, the ballet is naturally attractive.

Beauty is more beautiful, or might be more beautiful, where everything is sacrificed to beauty. Even chemistry during the last few years has brought its own special tribute of coloured fires—the flame-tints without the ballet, or the ballet without the flame-tints, would be a feast for the eyes, but both together are necessarily irresistible.

On the whole, about as little effect and as low an effect is got out of the modern ballet as it is possible to get out of such splendid materials. We have nothing to say against the beauty of the women, the richly tinted atmosphere, the machinery, the rare and costly dress fabrics, and the magical *mise en scène*; but the human element, the life, without which all accessories, however splendid, do but serve as dressing to a corpse, do but display more freely the bare bones, the naked skeleton of Art deceased—the life of the ballet, that is to say the dancing, where is it in the modern ballet? The substitute for dancing, graceful dancing, is, alas! a spectacle of grim torture—the human body stretched upon the rack!

Yet, degraded as is the modern ballet, we must not forget that the ballet properly so called is the parent of all representative art. Before man wrote and painted signs, he danced. Before music and singing and the plastic arts there were pantomimic dances; among almost all the earliest nations dancing of some kind entered into the rites and ceremonies of religion, nay, entered largely into social and political life, for there were dances of war, and of triumph, and of pleasure.

The Jewish records are full of allusions to the dance, David dancing before the ark, Jephtha's and Herodias' daughters dancing in joy and festivity, Moses and Miriam dancing to songs of triumph:—and the Greek chorus itself in the oldest times was nothing but the assemblage in the public place of the whole population of the city for the purpose of singing songs and dancing dances of thanksgiving to the Gods.

But as to the Greeks we owe the origin of the drama (offspring of the pantomimic dance), so to them was due probably the highest conception and development of the art of dancing. In combination with the science of gymnastics or the culture of the body they appear to have raised the dance into a system of expression capable of ren-

dering all the different passions. The famous dance of the Eumenides or Furies is said to have communicated such terror to the spectators that the effect could scarcely have been greater had the Furies themselves taken possession of the stage.

When we learn further that the attitudes of the public dancers inspired the greatest Greek sculptors, who studied them for their perfect delineation of passion, and when we look at the works of Phidias, we begin to realise the extent of difference between those dances which the Greeks witnessed and those inelegant capers which we are accustomed to applaud!

The Spartans had a law compelling all parents to exercise their children in dancing from the age of five. The little creatures were led by grown men into the public place, and there trained for the armed-dance.

The Pyrrhic dance, expressive of overtaking and overcoming an enemy, performed by the young men in four parts, must have been a kind of exciting ballet or dramatic dance.

Aristotle places dancing and poetry in the same rank, and says in his *Poetics* that there were dancers who, by rhythm applied to gesture, expressed manners, passions and actions. The Greeks had fine poets, and therefore we cannot say, "So much the worse for poetry!" but we cannot help seeing how the art of dancing has fallen from its high estate and become a vulgar and tasteless exhibition of mere muscular dexterity, actually lower down in the scale of Art than even the war dance of the Ojibbeways.

Greek dancing was more than a mere feat of agility. The fire that communicated itself to the spectators came from those who were themselves touched with enthusiasm, unlike the human marionette, the ballet-dolls-on-wires of to-day.

But, for good or for evil, the passion for the dance can never die: it is a real instinct, irrepressible and universal. We see in all children, and in animals, and among the rudest tribes, the impulse to express various emotions by rhythmic movement. Children often dance with rage as well as with delight.

As we grow older, and the eye becomes cultivated and the blood sluggish, we prefer looking on, to dancing ourselves. And in the maturer periods of the world amongst civilised nations, dancing, as a studied art, is chiefly left to professional and trained dancers. Yet how often when a rhythmic tune is played do grown people beat the foot or nod the head in time with it. A little more and they would gesticulate—a little more and they would dance.

The singular power which rhythmic motion has over the human mind, and its contagious property, may be noticed in the curious dancing epidemics of the middle ages (which seemed to end in a kind of possession), and again in the coarse rites of one or two modern religious sects.

Dancing in the East (as seen in the *Almé* of Egypt and the Nautch girls of India) probably gives us a better idea of what the ancients practised than anything which we have in our cold North : it is chiefly given up to professional dancers, who are often highly gifted and highly educated. But with us professional dancing has become inseparably connected with the opera stage, and with but one subject, the tender passion, and this in its conception and illustration is so vulgar and so vague, that it would almost be true to say that all who do not consider the ballet indecent, believe it to be unmeaning—as it often is.

It is not my intention to give any history of the ballet here, or to enter into the view which De la Motte took of the matter when he proposed to reform the ballet in 1697 ; neither can I discuss the plans of Noverre and others, who separated the art of dancing from the chaos of singing, acting, and declamation in which it was embedded, but unfortunately pushed their reforms beyond all legitimate limits.

What I shall attempt to do is simply to look at the ballet as it now is, and consider how far it might be made a more noble, sensible, poetical, and graceful exhibition than we find it.

WHO LIKES THE BALLET ?

It must always be a matter for regret to those who really care for beautiful spectacles, such as the stage of a theatre is best fitted to display, that so little is made of such vast opportunities. The penetrating light of the footlamps and the ingenious introduction of other and more brilliant kinds of light, make colours more dazzling on the stage than they appear anywhere else. Changing lights, red, green, or gold transformations, mingled with glimpses of beautiful women, and the forms of flowers and shells, are just so much better than fireworks, because they take in so much more. But how often all is spoiled—or partially so—by the vulgarity of conception and treatment that seems now to creep in wherever there is a stage to offer the chance. Sometimes the curtain rises on a beautiful *coup d'œil*, but directly the flowers turn into maidens, and the maidens begin to dance, the coarseness of the attitudes, or the frivolity of the subject, or the ungainliness of the individual dresses (previously hidden in the calyx of the flower) destroys all the enjoyment in the fairy scene. It seems as if sylphs had been deposed by satyrs—angels by fallen angels.

This leads us to the question : What is the modern ballet for ? Who goes to the ballet ? Who supports it ? What are the elements of that public which the manager (doubtless) carefully studies before he invests so many thousands of pounds in an exhibition whose costliness is yearly increasing ?

Two elements chiefly compose the ballet-going and ballet-loving

public. (1.) The coarse people, who would go anywhere to see what provokes unseemly laughter and unseemly jests, and who pay for a certain coarse element introduced into the dances. (2.) The æsthetic people who love music and colour, and graceful forms and movements, and who in order to enjoy them, "bolt" the coarseness, as a child gulps through castor oil to reach the ginger wine. There is a third element, the ultra-innocent and the vague people, who go because others go, and who gape through the entertainment without understanding it; but these, though numerous, are not sufficiently so to be called supporters of the ballet.

MUSIC.

Perhaps the first thing to notice in the ballet is the music, which strikes up, and is supposed to inspire the dancer, before she begins. Alas! the music of most ballets simply tortures the musician. Fortunately, the generality of ballet-goers are only semi-cultivated in ear and eye, as we shall presently show; but now and then a musician joins the throng in the theatre, and what does he think of the worthless, trashy melodies that are meant to transport his mind into the state needful to enjoy the rest of the show? Does he like the wriggles, and the contorted tunes with "jumps" at the end of the bars, reminding one of a large insect flopping about with wounded legs and wings—tunes that seem to have their heads under their arms, and their limbs twisted with a sort of musical lumbago and St. Vitus's dance—not any natural dance, altogether a very bathos of tune?

The musician (the unhappy performer excepted) stops his ears, and uses only his eyes; and when he goes home to his wife, he tells her how everything has gone down, sings her bits of Rossini's ballet dancing tunes, graceful, inspiriting, beautiful, and wonders why people can't write like that, or if they can't, why they do not adhere to the standard airs, instead of spoiling the public taste for good music.

Insipid, indeed, are most of the strains which inspire modern dancers. And who are they? With what are they inspired? Alas! the nymphs and all their works are much on a level with the tunes they dance to.

DRESS.

Anybody, in order to dance, must be lightly clothed. The body must be perfectly free in its movements, that is to say, entirely unimpeded by long or heavy garments. Ten yards of silk would materially interfere with the leaps, and twirls, and contortions which are expected of a fairy. The very wind caused by the movements would catch the folds and sometimes throw the dancer down. This has originated the very light and short attire of most ballet-dancers, fifty petticoats of gauze half-a-yard long.

But this is not only the most ungraceful dress in itself that could be

devised, it is also the most unbecoming to the figure. Everybody who has really studied the question has noticed how short the dancer always looks, unless she be six feet high.

As she first enters flopping and leaping, this is hardly at once visible, you have not the opportunity of comparing her with other less fantastically attired women; but let her for a moment cease to gyrate, and as soon as she comes down on both feet, and runs to take her place in some other part of the stage, the whole ugliness of her dress is apparent. In no position can it look well; the tight waist, with the sudden



Figs. 1 and 2.—Pose and Repose.

out-flying circle of skirt that just covers the hip and no more, gives the lower limbs the appearance of growing at a great distance from each other, which is eminently disagreeable, and which is indicated in the sketches (one of the ballet-dancer in pose, and one in comparative

repose), especially the ungainly wiggle-waggle of normal running in this dress. This effect is simply caused by the ungraceful form of the petticoats.

The wheel of tulle is often contrasted with deep vandykes of gold or colour, arsenic green if the dancer is intended to represent a rose—oh, graceless *travestie* of that majestic plant! At other times wreaths or bouquets of flowers are substituted: these are less obtrusively ugly, and yet as bad in taste from an artistic point of view, for during the necessary gambols no bouquets or wreaths could lie on such a skirt; therefore, however lightly disposed, they always look out of place and impossible.

We cannot help noticing that the petticoats of gauze, once innumerable, have, of late years, manifestly decreased in number. At one time, the first of the fluffy garments—shall we say breeches?—were never visible, but now they almost always are so; and whilst this detail does not in the least improve the beauty of the costume during the leaps, it gives needless indelicacy to them. But perhaps in the face of facts this is hypercriticism.

Many managers have almost banished even this memory of clothing from the stage. In fact, in one popular piece of the day, the memory can hardly grow fainter. In the course of the first few scenes one becomes so habituated to the appearance of women more and more—let us say—unprotected, that at length one is not surprised to find the last scanty semblance disappear, and the Cupids are as little incommoded by anything more voluminous than tights as are some savages

who depend for all clothing upon the beautifully simple adornment of the necklace.

It is touching to watch the increasing candour of the ladies. They begin with high dress—the very high dress of the last century—sack-backs, stomachers, and trains. They then appear in under-petticoats; thence they take a step nearer to a state of innocence, and are actually seen in white stays and—boots! From this one bold stride brings them very near to Mother Eve herself. And as nothing much beyond this is practicable on earth, the rest of the story is transported to the Moon.



Figs. 3 to 7.—Some "Babils and Bijoux."

And yet, compared with the rest of the costumes, the Cupids are beautiful. For the human body is beautiful, and most garments only lessen its grace. Leaving the moral view to take care of itself we must grant them so much.

The girls who figure as Cupids may indeed fail to satisfy even a low standard of modesty in their public appearance and in their *maintien* and deportment; but nevertheless the eye passes from the grotesque surrounding figures, which exhibit every contortion of vulgarity, and experiences almost a sense of rest in the simplicity of natural lines; and from a purely artistic point of view the Cupids are much superior to the females in white stays and seemingly bare legs, and in some respects are really perhaps less objectionable than the Turkish ladies who mingle with them, and who look even worse in their diaphanous trousers than the Cupids who do without. But why should we trouble ourselves about what modest women think, and whether they can get up a blush or not? If they did not like such sights they would not go to see them. But they do go, so we can only infer that they like what they see.

Why popular prejudice should be satisfied with the belief that the Cupids wear tights, when they are made to imitate skin so exactly that it is impossible to tell where the tights begin and the skin ends—this is a question into which we cannot now enter. The English are a peculiar people, a wonderful mixture of bat-eyed tolerance and dragon-like intolerance.

But to revert to the ordinary ballet dress sketched in figs. 1 and 2, we may point out that if the dresses were a little longer and less fan-



Fig. 8.

ran away with Mynheer till his tired bones fell into dust, leaving the leg as frisky as ever (fig. 8).

The difference between a graceful and ungraceful dancing dress is here sketched. My readers can decide which is which. The form,



Figs. 9 and 10. —Grace and Disgrace.

simple as I have suggested, following the figure, expressing, not hiding it, and adapting itself to every attitude, would admit of far more and far prettier decoration. A crape or satin garment, with delicately embroidered margin, or a garb of pure gold or silver tissue, would be infinitely more graceful and more delicate than a whirl of fluff, and gaudy, meaningless paper wings. Beneath, the tights (if the British public demand tights) would be far better in pure white than in the unpleasing flesh colour or deep pink which have lately become the *mode*. Probably, thus attired, the dancer would gain credit for much intricate skill and graceful movement that at present pass unnoticed, as the eye is confused by over-many details: and there is not the slightest doubt that her own personal beauty would be far better set off.

POSTURE.

I am afraid it is not possible to say much in favour of the postures that now-a-days the British public most applaud in a *danseuse*. What movements are admired—what attitudes are graceful—these questions are unfortunately distinct from each other. There are, indeed, standard feats of agility which always “fetch” John Bull, and deservedly, while agility is the *whole* end and aim of the public dancer. But some of the most popular gestures and postures seem to us decidedly ungraceful; indeed, they seem to have little merit

beyond their effrontery. We are continually reminded of the three Gates of Busyrane, on the first of which was written, "Be bold;" on the second, "Be bold, be bold, and evermore be bold;" and on the third the warning, "Be not too bold." How many of our "fairies" seem to have leapt lightly over the two first gates! but have any yet reached the third?

When the feet are at the utmost distance from each other that the length of the body will admit of, the angle is not, we think, either elegant or delicate. A pair of nutcrackers can hardly be called a beautiful instrument, still it seems sometimes as though the whole aim of woman on the stage were to convert herself into something like that useful but ugly machine, and to demonstrate to the astonished spectators that a ballet dancer and a woman are not identical. Certainly it must be a novelty to everybody, accustomed to the almost severe proprieties of modern English life, to see women in positions which, if a little girl attempted them at home, would very properly gain her a whipping. What would be thought ungraceful and inappropriate (to say the least) almost anywhere else, we willingly and eagerly pay high prices to witness on a lighted platform.

Our business here is not with the morality of such exhibitions, but their artistic merit. Those who consider the ballet unwholesome and degrading, had better cease taking their young sons and daughters to stare at it. Those who do not, must not affect to be shocked when they see on paper what has so lately delighted them at Covent Garden, nor is it wise illogically to affirm that what is fit to be watched for three hours in the evening is unfit to be read of the next morning. What we have seen, that we speak, and a spade by any other name is a spade still. From our present standpoint whatever is really beautiful shall be commended for its beauty, and we shall leave the moralists to support the play or not as they please.

What we may describe as the T feat (fig. 11) occurs in "Babil and Bijou." There is very little beauty in the position to recommend it. But at least the form of the cross, if that is what it is meant to be, is simple enough—and harmless. Therefore we will leave it to the artistic approbation of our readers.

There is the grand X feat: one that is seldom omitted and always "draws." But is a woman graceful when she is in the shape of an X? Do you feel a thrill of admiration, of satisfaction, O paying public! when you see a fair-faced girl, robed in a silver cloud, deliberately approach and place herself in the arms of a very airy and muscular gentleman, who supports her manfully while she sticks up



Fig. 11.—The T Feat.

one foot pointing to the sky like a pink lightning-rod, and bends her head half-way to the ground! The point of view which the audience have is of two legs, a whirl of scattered clothing, and a face upside



Figs. 12 and 13,—The X Feat.

down. Now, apart from the delicacy of this exploit, is it beautiful? Because if it is, there is *something* to be said for it. But if, as we imagine, it is not, why is it tolerated by the opera-glasses either of the British matron, that dragon of virtue, or the connoisseur, or any body but the British snob? Yet fair lips and grave, sober, matronly lips pronounce it a "Lovely! lovely sight!"

Again, a favourite feat is, a number of girls, with as little on as possible, dancing forward to the footlights, and having arrived there, simultaneously giving a kick at the audience. Who are the intended kicked ones—whether the ladies, or the gentlemen, or the prompter, or the band, it is difficult to decide. But is a kicking attitude either a womanly or a seraphic one? Is a kick foreshortened a graceful gesture? Let any lady kick at herself in the glass, quietly at home, and decide. We will abide by her decision. We do not know of any instance where a lady, in the laudable and natural desire to appear attractive in the eyes of the man she hopes to marry, approaches her lover with a series of "tall" kicks. We think the lover would be shocked, if not disgusted.



Fig. 14.

Yet, with his heart athrill with the memory of her whom he most respects and admires of women, and for whose sweet sake all womanhood is elevated and idealised, he takes a stall at the opera-house, and is contentedly kicked at by a couple of dozen stout-limbed women in tights. He fancies he enjoys it. Would he like to see his Chloe in that dress? Would he like to watch her galloping and rearing, more like a horse than a human being, before a hundred close spectators? He must be a very peculiar lover if he would.

In "Ali Baba" (Gaiety) there is a great deal more kicking than is necessary. Ali Baba's son (performed by an active though ill-

advised female), a frivolous young man, whose chief attention seems centred on his legs, indulges so frequently in a kicking attitude that the impression is left on the mind that it is a sort of chronic complaint with him. In season and out of season he throws up his leg apparently at the ceiling. When his father addresses him, up it goes; when his lady-love approaches him, up it goes. It had nothing to do with the situations. The continual jerk worried the eye and took one's attention off the only genius of the whole performance, which was of course Ali Baba himself; it was like that convulsive wooden clown of our childhood, with a ball and strings attached to his limbs, which twitch into impossible positions as you swing the ball. We were glad when this vulgar young man's evening work was done. We thought he must be tired. We heartily wished him—or her—too tired ever to perform again.

When I think of what the ballet might be, I feel the more ashamed of those who have so degraded it, towards those whose base demands have created such a supply. We hold up our pious hands and eyes when we hear of the brutal penny gaffs and the many low haunts in London where the great unwashed satisfy those tastes which the upper classes satisfy at Covent Garden. But I am credibly informed—and to our national shame be it spoken—that in many a “gaff,” however rough the entertainment, there is nothing so intrinsically bad, nothing so utterly degrading to womanhood, nothing so subtly hurtful to public morals, nothing so palpably, refinedly, outrageously ugly and indecent, as the fashionable ballet, which draws thousands of cultivated men and women to its shrine.

Probably, to some minds, there is the same zest and delightful incongruity in a multitude of innocent and modest women contentedly witnessing a display of this kind that there was in the Roman days in a number of gentle and tender maidens applauding the bloody combats of the arena. Perhaps in all ages, some will find it to their taste to feel, however remotely, the *animal* within us asserting itself if only for a brief three hours. Cruelty and licence are both alive in even the gentlest and the purest, it is said: they are chained and kennelled: and so may they remain!—but 'is there any harm in a feeble rattling of the relentless door, a toothless gnawing at the chain? Each of us must judge for himself.

We do not wish to condemn the modern ballet without a word in its defence. We do not wish to imply that the ballet is all bad, and that there is nothing beautiful in it at all. We only say there is at present far more to object to than to praise or to admire. There are many beautiful scenes which we could quote, and which recent chemical discoveries are annually improving. There are many ingenious and beautiful steps and figures in the dances, but how they would be multiplied if the audience knew something about

the art of dancing, and if the dancers felt that they had to satisfy a more fastidious taste ! Where there is not much knowledge there cannot be much fastidiousness.

Among many unpleasing and ungraceful steps there is one which is extremely pretty, and, strange to say, popular also. It is that tiny nutshell kind of progress on the toe tips, which is more like a vibration of the feet than dancing. The whole body is motionless, and the mind concentrated on the toe tips, and the eye of the public is concentrated too. This dexterous step could be as easily and more effectively performed in a skirt a little longer and less like the frill of Punch's dog than the usual one (see fig. 10). There is nothing objectionable in this step except what belongs to the dress ; if motion can produce the same emotion as sound, it may be compared to the soft twittering of a bird : it is like the quivering of the sensitive leaf when the hand touches it. From this the dancer, alas, generally breaks into the "flop," that reminds one of nothing so much as a big butterfly trying to fly with a pin through his back, and the illusion vanishes.

This "flopping," which is interspersed with leaps, is not at all graceful, and is quite unmeaning. As all musicians know, when the dancer is in full vigour and first-rate condition, the music is usually allowed to flag in time : she can then take longer steps and jump higher. When her physical strength is less, the music is taken faster, and all her movements are more rapid. During the "flopping" steps we are always glad when the dancer is out of condition, as then she darts about more madly and it is over sooner.

In many modern ballets the number of beautiful girls that appear is a matter for admiration, and one which receives much more attention than it did a few years ago ; but they are usually girls more bent on advertising their own perfections than on making any lasting impression by their skill : that is to say, often they stand about for hours doing nothing, taking no part in the piece, while a few are engaged in jumping about ; and, even at times, there may be detected a Naiad out of step or out of time with the rest, because too much occupied in ogling her favourites in the house—a fault that would never be tolerated by any audience really understanding and caring for the dancing as an art, or for the artistic completeness of the *coup d'œil*. This is partly the fault of those who arrange the parts ; but chiefly because there is no dramatic instinct in the players—or rather the "loafers."

Something may be made of even the most trivial rôle if the player has any interest in it. I might here instance the "Squirrel" in "Babil and Bijou," as a squirrel having a capital part, but a squirrel absolutely without interest in it. There is not a vestige of artistic feeling in that squirrel. An occasional aimless scratch with her paws, and then a long, long relapse into stillness and forgetfulness of all but a myriad eyes. So tame a squirrel was hardly

worth calling from her native woods, where she never would have had spirit enough to pluck her own nuts.

Why the ballet is no longer what it was originally meant to be why the dancer no longer holds the position that she once did (and might do again), is partly for the same reason that modern plays are not what ancient plays were. Popular discrimination does not require a Shakspeare or a De la Motte. Therefore, just as we have no longer great dramatic writers, we have no artists in dancing, but mere jugglers, and artificial skill in contortions has taken the place of dramatic gift and appreciation. We English, cold and unfastidious as we are, can hardly conceive of Aristotle's estimation of the nimble art; of a dance bringing tears to the eyes, or firing the soul with noble feelings, or a passion of courage, or terror! Think of any dance, as such, being seriously compared to a symphony of Beethoven or one of the Idylls of the King! No, our highest conception of the emotion given by mere dancing is an enervating sensation, voluptuous, languorous. That is all we can rise—or sink—to. Many minds are not susceptible even of that. The intricate dancing, meaning, as it does, nothing, or meaning what is at all events unintelligible to a great number, passes before the eyes like the hollow show that haunted Tennyson's Prince. People stare, and praise and applaud because others praise and applaud. They do not *understand* the skill, they do not discriminate between grace and ungrace and disgrace, they do not detect a slovenly step as they detect an imperfect rhyme in a song; what they appreciate in a ballet is often an infinitesimal portion of the performance, sometimes only that which has nothing to do with the dancing at all—the general glitter, and colour, and associations of a fashionable place of resort.

THE COUP D'ŒIL.

We are not able here to suggest the kind of subjects that might inspire the ballet, because it is impossible to see a thing from a point of view entirely novel, and almost diametrically opposed to all our ideas and associations connected with this form of entertainment. If any mind could once grasp the notion of a ballet being as grand and as noble a representation as one of Shakspeare's plays—or, indeed, any fine drama;—if a dancer could spring into existence with the feelings and powers of the public dancers in Aristotle's day, we might then compose scenes and collect subjects for the purpose. Then our sailors' brave hearts might be fired by a dance like that Pyrrhic dance of Sparta, our ministers inspired by dances expressive of all the noble passions, our clergy by dances—why not?—such as the early Christians joined in at their religious meetings, and we should all be the better for it, as we are for reading poems, and essays, and sermons!

But I seem to be writing in an unknown tongue. Whatever we may some day rise to, as yet all this is so far off that it is like a ghostly vision in the gloaming. We have been so long in the dark that we have forgotten the sunset, and cannot believe in the dawn.

But taking the ballet as we know it, an exhibition of agility and pretty colours, we may make a few suggestions for the *coup d'œil*, which does not materially concern the dancing, although the dancing ought, as far as is possible to the intelligence of the ballet writer, to coincide with and carry out the spirit of the scene.

The beautiful and ingenious transformation scenes are unmeaning, unless some reason be given in the story for the rapid change of colours, and this might be mentioned in the programme in lieu of the strings of feeble puns that generally fill up that paper. Either the appearance of a rainbow in the sky, or April changes of weather, or the rapid transition of moods, must be the *rationale* for the transformations. That would lend a new and increased interest to this very graceful effect. When flowers suddenly bloom into maidens, a dream, or some mythological or poetic reason, should lead up to it; when the crowd of girls is meant to represent a "*garden of girls*" the most delicate and poetic view of a garden should alone be taken. What can be a more vulgar conception of a garden than that in "*Babil and Bijou*?"

Let any man who means to compose ballet scenes respect his materials enough to take a little more thought for his work. Let him go into the gardens and meadows and note the exquisite movements and combinations of colour that Mother Nature has prepared before his eyes. Let him take with him a mind full of Chaucer's, or Tennyson's, or Keats', or Miss Ingelow's, or Morris's, or Buchanan's songs and lyrics—or anyone who sees the beautiful world with worshipful eyes, if he be not a seer himself,—let him recall the thousand sweet legends that Greece, and India, and Germany, and Scotland, and Ireland, and Old England herself, have registered all ready to inspire him.

Here are some of the effects which he will see, and which might be suggested on the stage.

First: the long grass blowing to and fro in the wind, now green, now bluish, according to the "air."

Girls robed in green gauze and pennons, kneeling in the stage.

As they bend forward all is green: as they bend backward they fling up strings of pale blue flowers, giving the crowd a bluish impression.

A stream of water edged with low willows, blowing in the wind.

Girls in dull green robes changing to white or grey as they move simultaneously, as the willow boughs change.

The sea with its waves and foam, and skimming gulls.

A crowd of girls dancing in blue, the motions made to imitate the tossing and swerving of the waves. White birds darting over their heads; suddenly they fall into a buttercup meadow, throwing off blue cloaks and turning to gold, when the hero reaches the opposite shore.

The river that enchanted the Knight, hearing the Lorelei sing.

A stream of girls kneeling and waving windy scarfs, as the Knight comes by. He is caught in the flood, which suddenly becomes instinct with life, and resolves itself into a group of bridal maidens dancing round the happy pair.

A yellow fog, broken through by the sun.

Maidens hidden by the whirling of their amber veils, and breaking into a sudden flood of silver and golden dazzle, with the singing of birds and the scent of flowers.

How many more effects crowd into one's head that might be suggested in the ballet! Moonlight scenes, of purple and silver—dawnings where black changes to grey, and grey to white, and the white to a flood of rose-coloured light,—the pink flutter of totter-grass, whose whistling and waving might be suggested by branches of bells. The sounds might be suggested too—the splashing of water by the clapping of hands, the hissing of cornfields and the music of the wind by soft airy singing. Why are none of these effects studied and reproduced, as artists study and reproduce them for their pictures, either accurately or conventionally? How easy would be the *aurora borealis* on a scene of ice, or any sunset or sunrise on any scene for the introduction of the coloured lights!

The word "artist" has been sadly abused. The scene-painter is called an artist (*vide* the figures that surmount the stage at St. George's Hall—O my country!) The manager is called an artist, the dancers are all artists, the band are artists, as if an artist were born every day, and were not a Phoenix! Now, with rare exceptions, all these people are simply skilled artisans and no artists at all; and there must be at once perceptible a wide difference between the two ranks. When the player protests against stuff that degrades even his skill, when the scene-painter goes to nature for his effects and figures, when the manager strives to honour and not abuse his splendid materials, and to elevate rather than lower the tone of the stage, when the dancers shew some gifts rarer than lissome joints and the absence of a sense of decency, we may then begin to give them the noble title of "artist."

The first thing is for the bat-eyed English to realise what it is they really see. It sometimes seems as though the high price of the stalls invested the proceedings with an ideal glory blinding the eyes of the most prudish. At any rate scenes, which in the presence of the *élite* of London society appear not only bearable but delightful, may possibly appear almost shocking when described in print.

But this is only a cheat which the mind plays upon itself. Our sketches of the popular ballet are the reverse of exaggerated. In fact, it would be impossible to exaggerate what is nightly witnessed and applauded. On the other hand, not the half nor the worst has been here set down. Nothing like the worst has been sketched.

To the censorious British Bat we can merely say—This is what you see when you go to the ballet, and this is what you pay for when you get your admission : and if you deny it, it is because you are a bat, and ‘haven’t noticed.’

Whether what we nightly tolerate on the boards of a public theatre be right or wrong, this much is certain : whatever is not fit to be called by its name and described in print is not fit to be openly witnessed by crowds of presumably modest women and guileless children. Such spectacles are dangerous to many, degrading to some, and useless to all, and our grand airs of inconsistent prudery make us the butt of the vicious, the jest of the foreigner, and a disgrace to the country in which we live.

M. E. H.

THE CENTRAL TELEGRAPH STATION.

OF the thousands of persons who daily pass along Moorgate Street, comparatively few have any idea of the busy hive of industry situate in what is now called Telegraph Street. Boys clad in the familiar Post-office uniform are seen flitting in and out, and at certain hours of the day groups of youths and of well-dressed girls may also be seen to emerge into the broader thoroughfare, where they are speedily absorbed into the constant stream of passengers. But of the ceaseless activity within the dingy red brick building appropriated to the business of the Central Telegraph Office, not one in ten thousand perhaps has the slightest conception. Yet from this mighty nervous centre, at every moment of the day and night, there are flashing forth to the remotest villages of the kingdom, and under the sea to all parts of the earth, tidings of family weal or woe, utterances of love and fear, plaintive entreaties, joyous announcements; mingled with the stern prose of commerce and of politics. Away go the silent messages with lightning speed, under the streets, through the air, along railways and highways, over moor and mountain, down into valleys and dells, across rivers and streams, by the forest and the fen; and everywhere watchful eyes and ears are quick to observe and swift fingers are waiting to write down and transmit the varied tidings. By day and night, on Sundays as well as throughout the week, during festivals and fasts, there is unceasing activity in Telegraph Street, and yet the work is carried on with comparatively little noise or outward show. The place resembles a hive of human bees in more respects than one. Messengers are perpetually passing in and out of the chief portal. Staircases and passages are full of life. The operating rooms are so closely packed with busy workers as to be almost crowded. Keen eyes are watching the rapid deflections of the needle instruments; quick ears are interpreting the swift "chink, chink" of the little bells; nimble fingers are flying over the paper to fix the messages as fast as they arrive. There are no drones in this hive. All the 638 female clerks and the 420 male clerks, with the 199 boy messengers, have enough to do, as may be supposed from the fact that from 26,000 to 28,000 messages are despatched every twenty-four hours, irrespective of Press messages, which sometimes amount to 350,000 words in that period. Every telegram from the provinces for any part of London is sent to this central station, and is thence transmitted immediately to the proper district; and every message from the numerous metropolitan stations comes through this centre, which

is also the medium between all distant places, the wires of which run through London. If necessary, of course, unbroken contact can be effected between the two terminal stations, and in some cases and for special purposes the wires are thus "switched," as the technical phrase goes. But in practice it is found best and quickest to transmit the messages through the central station. Thus the Parliamentary debates are telegraphed direct on two wires from Westminster to the Intelligence Department in Telegraph Street, where the sheets are at once distributed to the several circuits over which the news has to be sent to the provincial towns. There are seven separate wires to Glasgow, five to Southampton, fifteen to Manchester, and seventeen to Liverpool. To such places, where the traffic is very great, certain wires or circuits are appropriated for sending messages, and others for receiving them.

To economise labour and time, several of the principal City stations, as Cornhill, Fenchurch Street, Temple-Bar, the General Post-office, and Leadenhall Street, are connected with Telegraph Street by means of pneumatic-tubes, which are worked from the central office. A dozen messages can be rolled into a small compass, placed in properly constructed carriers of gutta-percha covered with felt, and sent through the tubes in a few seconds. While we are writing, a bell rings from Fenchurch Street, to denote that a packet of messages is ready. The boy in charge closes the little door of thick plate glass at the end of the tube marked Fenchurch Street, pulls a handle, and thus exhausts the air from that tube, through which the packet is sucked, coming with a dull "thud" against the glass. He rings another bell by electricity to inform the clerk at Cornhill that a packet is coming there, places it in the end of the tube marked Cornhill, closes the glass door, pulls a handle, and the packet is driven through in twenty seconds by air pressure. So at other City stations. Packets of messages are continually arriving and departing; the former to be sent to other parts of London or the provinces; the latter to be delivered by hand in the respective neighbourhoods. There is another ingenious contrivance to spare labour and time, and especially to prevent the confusion and delay that would be caused by messengers running all over the instrument rooms. As far as possible, the message papers are transmitted from one side of the rooms to another, and from one floor to another, by bands of endless tapes; a boy at each end inserting the papers and taking them off. They are next handed over to experienced lady-clerks for the purpose of having the messages checked; then sorted by a special male staff, who possess extraordinary geographical knowledge, being in effect walking gazetteers. Finally, they are delivered to the respective tables, at which the operators sit in close lines. Each instrument has a fixed number, and the name of the station or of the circuit of stations, printed conspicuously on a tablet. Each station is known by

a particular "code" or call-signal, which is also printed on the tablet; M R denoting Manchester, L V Liverpool, G W Glasgow, and so forth. A message arriving, for example, from Liverpool for Brighton, is read off, or self-printed, and then taken on to the clerk at the Brighton instrument, who immediately transmits it. The first floor is devoted to metropolitan messages; the second to those for the provinces and abroad. In the latter, there is direct communication with the Atlantic Cables, the Mediterranean, the Indo-European, and other foreign lines. Of the total number of clerks, 341 are stationed in the metropolitan gallery, and 717 in the provincial gallery. Each clerk, as fast as a message is received from the distant station, writes it on a form, which is then placed in an open wire basket on a stand above the instrument, and a messenger comes round every few moments and removes it to the proper destination. Or if the message is to be transmitted, it is sent to the clerk of another circuit to be re-telegraphed to its ultimate destination.

The Morse printing instruments, of which there are 120 in the metropolitan gallery, and 102 in the provincial gallery, are beautiful contrivances. The electric current acts upon a marker having a vertical motion, and according as this is communicated at the other end, certain dots and dashes are made upon the strip of blue paper as it passes along beneath the marker. Each letter has its signs, which are as intelligible as ordinary writing after a few months' practice. The alphabet is given below, and that of the single needle instrument is appended in the narrow column. The long dash in the Morse printer is equivalent to a beat to the right of the single needle, and the short dash corresponds with a beat to the left.

A - -	/	O - - -	///
B - - -	/ \ \	P - - - -	√ / \
C - - - -	/ \ /	Q - - - -	/// √
D - - -	/ \ \	R - - -	√ \
E -	\	S - - -	\\
F - - -	√ /	T -	/
G - - -	// \	U - - -	√ /
H - - - -	\\ \	V - - - -	\\ \ /
I - -	\\	W - - -	√ /
J - - - -	√ //	X - - - -	/ \ √
K - - -	/ √	Y - - - -	/ √ /
L - - - -	√ \ \	Z - - - -	// \ \
M - - -	/ /	Ch - - - -	///
N - -	/ \		

One great advantage of the Morse printer is that it is perfectly automatic, and a mistake is easily traceable; whereas in the needle

and bell instruments, the eye or the ear may be deceived, or may not be quick enough, and the receiver of the message will then have to stop it for re-signalling. Of the single needle instruments there are 128 in use at the central station, with one double needle, five Bright's bells, and five A B C. instruments.

The single needle is used with the nearer and less important stations, and in the country and for local purposes. Bright's bell instrument requires very careful adjustment and working, and it has to be entrusted to the most skilled operators. There are also three Morse sounders in use, one each to Manchester, Dublin, and Norwich. The A B C instruments have the alphabet arranged on their face in a circle, and being very easy to work, although the slowest, they are used for private messages. There are also twelve Hughes's type-printers, which print the message at each end in bold Egyptian letters on strips of white paper. This instrument is worked by means of keys resembling those of a piano, the letter being marked on each. It is simply a matter of quick manipulation, for as soon as the electric current is applied the operator proceeds exactly as if she were playing a tune, and the strip is seen to issue from the side of the instrument with the message printed upon it; a corresponding process being instantaneously carried on at the distant station. Thus, while we are waiting, in company with Mr. H. C. Fischer, the very efficient controller of the central office (whose great courtesy and patience in conducting us over the establishment demand special notice), the following message is sent more rapidly than it can be here written. "Mr. Fischer has visitors here. What weather have you in Liverpool?" Instantly, without any perceptible break, the answer comes, printed on the same slip of paper before our eyes. "Rather cloudy, but looks as if it would be fine after a bit." Then the instrument resumes the silent but swift message in which it is at the time employed. Hughes's type-printer requires no transcription, the printed slips being cut off and gummed on to the delivery forms.

But, perhaps, the most extraordinary piece of mechanism is that known as Wheatstone's automatic instrument, of which there are thirty-six in use, entirely in the provincial gallery. By means of this wonderful and ingenious contrivance, the message is punched out, according to an established code, on slips of white paper, three of which can be perforated in triplicate at once. The operator plays on two keys or on two round knobs, making therewith perforations resembling those between the rows of postage stamps. One clerk, who is peculiarly expeditious, was pointed out as being able thus to punch forty words in a minute. The white strips thus punctured are then taken to another beautiful and delicate instrument which acts upon the principle of the Jacquard loom. The end of the strip of paper is inserted beneath a small cogged wheel, which gradually

draws it on as required. Two slender levers of steel are acted upon by the battery and transmit the message, printing it at the other end by means of a Morse instrument. The slender levers pass into the perforations of the strip of white paper, and produce corresponding marks at the distant station, or at many stations; for the object is to manifold a message, and thus to save time and labour. In order to keep the Wheatstone supplied with perforated slips, it is needful to have several expeditious punchers at work for each circuit. The paper strip is a non-conductor of electricity, so that only when a perforated portion is passing through the "transmitter" is a current sent. The primary object of the Wheatstone automaton is to develop the carrying power of wires in cases where the amount of work is such that it could not be performed without great delay by the ordinary Morse printer. One wire worked by the Wheatstone is equal to three or four wires worked by the Morse, so far as regards carrying power. With a number of these automatic instruments arranged in a row the same message can be sent to a great number of places, north and south, east and west, for as the white strip passes through the first instrument to the left it has only to be inserted in the second, or one of the duplicate perforations can be used, and so on through the whole series; and thus the message can be duplicated or manifolded to all the places on the respective wires. In the circuit known as the "Western News Wire," for example, there are included the towns of Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Gloucester, Newport, Cardiff, and Cardiff Docks. Thus Parliamentary news, or an important speech, or any item of general news, can be simultaneously sent to many places at once, and at the rate of from 120 to 140 words in a minute. In this way Mr. Gladstone's speech at Greenwich, and Mr. Disraeli's at Manchester, last year, were transmitted to the principal London and provincial newspapers.

When the greater part of the Metropolis is wrapped in slumber, the night staff at the central office are busily employed. Private messages are then but few; the chief employment being furnished by the newspapers. Streams, rills, and drops of information are perpetually coming in for transmission to the various newspaper offices in London and in all the leading provincial towns. By means of such agencies as Reuter, the Central News, and the Press Association, home and foreign intelligence is gathered from all quarters, and is then diffused with lightning speed, so that readers of all the morning papers may be duly apprised of the latest news. During the session of Parliament abstracts of the debates are forwarded, and full reports of any speeches by local magnates, or on local topics. Some country papers, nine in all, have special wires, that is, their exclusive or prior use from 6 p.m. to 3 a.m. This costs £500 per annum, including the services of two clerks for transmitting and receiving. The provincial journals which indulge in this costly privilege are the *Manchester*

Guardian, the *Dublin Freeman's Journal*, the *Irish Times*, the *Scotsman*, the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Courant*, the *Dundee Advertiser*, and the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Mail*, to each of which several columns of matter are nightly forwarded. During the day, there is direct communication from the London Stock Exchange to the Exchanges of Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, and other towns; and, in like manner, the ruling prices of all commodities are known all over the kingdom. There are direct wires from Lloyd's, the Baltic, and other great commercial centres; and from these, incessant streams of messages are passing to and from all parts of the kingdom and of the world. A special table is devoted to Brighton, the rapid growth of which place, with its proximity to London, causes a large amount of telegraphic business. As far as possible the messages are sent direct to the nearest sub-office in Brighton, for which purpose a list of the streets is hung up, with initials to denote the particular office. There is also a special room for racing telegrams, and when any great event is on, as at Epsom, Newmarket, or Doncaster, upwards of a score of the best clerks are required for the performance of the work. Mr. Scudamore has so developed the system that intelligence is now forwarded direct from the racecourse, and in the case of the autumn manoeuvres a field telegraph is used so as to follow up every operation and movement. Special events require exceptional arrangements, and these are always made. Parliamentary elections, agricultural shows, the autumnal meetings of learned bodies, great political gatherings, colliery accidents, &c., give rise to a vast and sudden increase of work; and when such events occur in the neighbourhood of small offices, the clerical force has to be supplemented. During the illness of the Prince of Wales, two members of the special staff were stationed night and day in Sandringham House, and additional strength had to be given during that anxious time to the Lynn office. More recently, the awful catastrophe which befell the *Northfleet*, off *Dun-geeness*, compelled a sudden arrangement for transmitting news.

A clever contrivance is seen in one of the rooms at the central station for signalling Greenwich mean-time at a fixed hour every day. This chronograph is self-acting, and is in direct communication with the Observatory. At a few seconds before ten o'clock each morning, all the places which receive the time direct are at once brought into communication by clock-work, with the chronograph; the working instruments being at the same time automatically disconnected. Exactly at ten a signal is made from Greenwich, which is instantaneously seen at each of the widely distant places included in the arrangement; and these immediately transmit the signal to other places of which they are the respective centres, allowance being made for the few seconds required. As soon as the chronograph has performed its daily task, the various working instruments are again con-

nected with the wires by the self-acting mechanism. Each instrument has its own wires, conducting from the subterranean regions where the power is manufactured, and each is connected with a testing apparatus affixed to the wall, by means of which any fault can be at once traced and localised. This apparatus very much resembles a huge key-board or frame for numbered tablets, such as is seen at the entrance of many large manufactories. It consists of a series of brass knobs numbered, to correspond with the various instruments, and through which the testing wires are passed, being protected by gutta-percha, which is a non-conductor of electricity. By means of the susceptible instrument called the galvanometer, it is possible to determine with accuracy where a fault exists, and as soon as the precise spot is known it is easy to repair the defect.

Descending to the basement, the silent motive-power of all this marvellous activity is seen. Arranged on shelves around the walls and on wooden racks that intersect a room about twenty-five feet square, are a number of small oblong wooden boxes, resembling children's coffins. These are the batteries containing the imprisoned giant which performs all the work that we have witnessed upstairs. Most of the batteries contain ten cells, and four, six, eight, or more of such batteries are used with each instrument, according to distance. Daniel's batteries are now chiefly employed, being more durable and simple in construction than others. When once charged, they will ordinarily continue to work day and night for nearly a year.

In the basement is also the engine-room, whence the power is supplied to the pneumatic tubes on the second floor. Here, as throughout the building, everything is clean and bright, and the machinery performs its allotted task without ceasing. The air is condensed and exhausted by the respective mechanisms; the application, either of pressure or suction, being under the control of a boy in one of the rooms above, who simply pulls a knob, as has been already explained. All repairs and renovations of the mechanism have to be performed by night or on Sundays, when the work, never light, is yet lightest.

Telegraph business has grown to such an extent since it was undertaken by the Post-office on February 4, 1870, that it has even, in this short space of time, outstripped the capacities of this large pile of buildings. In the instrument-rooms every inch of space is turned to account, and it would be almost impossible to have any more operators at work. The wonder is that with 1058 clerks on the establishment (although, of course, this number is never present at one time) the work should be done so systematically and correctly. The place is well lit and well ventilated, and due provision is made for the order and comfort of the staff. No girls are employed before 8 A.M. or after 8 P.M., and they work in "shifts" or relays of eight hours each, with additional pay of fifty per cent. for overtime. The

pay of an average male clerk in the central office is twenty-five shillings a-week, and that of a female clerk from fourteen to sixteen shillings, although some of the latter earn considerably more, as is due to special aptitude and proficiency. The rate per hour for overtime varies from fourpence to ninepence, according to the scale of weekly pay. The large introduction of female labour, in a work to which feminine hands are peculiarly adapted, has done much to improve the condition of thousands of middle-class families, not only in London but at numerous provincial stations, where hundreds of girls are thus employed. The night staff of male clerks is separate, receiving higher pay. Suitable retiring rooms are provided in distinct parts of the building; and, as none are allowed to leave it during the period of duty, there are refreshment-rooms for their convenience and comfort. At present it is intended that the two upper floors of the new building in St. Martin's-le-Grand shall be devoted to telegraphic purposes; but even this greatly extended accommodation will not long suffice if the contemplated reduction of the inland rate to sixpence for twenty words should speedily come into effect. An ordinary British householder dreads the process known as removing or flitting, but this becomes a grave matter when it comprises a whole department, the work of which extends to every part of the empire. It is, however, unavoidable, owing to the unparalleled extension of business, which is witnessing a steady growth every month. According to the last report of the Postmaster-General, more than 1,300 new telegraph offices had been opened during the year, and the messages increased by twenty-five per cent.; the number being 11,760,000, in addition to 700,000 newspaper messages. Of the whole, nearly one-half are sent from twelve places, viz, London, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin, Newcastle, Birmingham, Bristol, Hull, Belfast, and Leeds. The telegraph is now largely used for the purposes of ordinary trade, and the old sentiment of surprise and alarm with which private persons used to receive a message is fast dying away. There will, doubtless, be yet greater developments in the science of telegraphy, and fresh mechanical appliances will be devised still further to abridge time and space.

W. H. S. AUBREY.

OUR EVENING PARTY.

I THOUGHT, said Miller, there was something in the wind that cold Monday night when I got back from the city and found a double supply of my favourite hot buttered muffins awaiting me, and my slippers so nicely aired on the hearth. But I was sure of it when my wife said smiling, "I hope you like the tea, dear; I put an extra spoonful in, because it's such a bleak night for you;" and when my eldest daughter Molly laughed so very heartily at my old story of the Chinese Missionary, which I think so good that I take every opportunity of repeating it.

"Now, Molly," said I, as I took down my meerschaum after tea; "now, Molly, what is it?"

"What is what, papa?" said Molly; but she blushed and laughed a conscious little laugh all the same.

"Come," I retorted, "let us have it. What is it you want to coax out of me now?"

"Well, Molly, as papa seems so cunning at finding us out, I think we had better tell him what we have been talking about," said my wife with a slightly nervous titter.

"A great deal better, you most artful of women," said I, with all the sternness I could muster; "and no more compliments to my superior wisdom, if you please. I am quite aware you are only oiling the machinery to make it run round your own way. All attempts too to bribe the court with more muffins will only injure your case. Proceed, therefore."

"Well, James," replied my wife, "the girls and I have been talking all the afternoon, and, ahem!—"

"And all the morning too, I have no doubt. So far the court quite agrees with you, madam," I interrupted, blowing out one of my most sarcastic wreaths of smoke.

"These poor things, James, do so want you to give them an evening party—something a little stylish, you know,—like other people," my wife continued, hurrying on like the stream when it has come to the brink of the precipice.

"An evening party!" I repeated in amazement.

"Oh yes! do, papa," said Molly, sitting down on the hassock at my feet, and putting her rosy cheek on my knee. She is an admirable hand at coaxing, is Molly.

"Yes, dear, why should we not be like our neighbours, at least sometimes—like Mrs. Vyner, for instance?" pursued my wife skilfully singling out an acquaintance who was my pet aversion.

"Well, because we can't, if we tried; we haven't got the money," I

replied. "You must surely see what nonsense it is to talk of our being like Vyner, when his partnership in Double X brings him in a couple of thousands a year, and I have barely as many hundreds."

"Well, but we might just show Mrs. Vyner we know what's what."

It was a mean advantage which my wife Jane was taking, and she knew it. Mrs. Vyner was from the same county town as myself, and on the strength of her father having had a thousand a year in land (and heaven knows how much more in rustic stupidity!) had always considered herself entitled to play the part of a superior being towards us. Nor was she content with thinking this, but was determined *we* should admit her glorious supremacy in style, house, furniture and belongings. In a word, she was my special abhorrence; and if there was one thing I should have liked, it would have been to see Mrs. V. 'brought down a peg.' Jane knew this weakness of mine very well, and I consider it an ungenerous action on her part to have appealed to it. However, for the present I resisted the temptation firmly.

In truth the notion of our giving an evening party was a very ridiculous one. I was secretary to a City company with about three hundred a-year. We had already sacrificed to the graces of London society—appearances—by taking a decent house at Notting Hill, and had hard work, what with Ned's schooling and the 'finishing' of my two daughters, to keep our heads fairly above water. So, like a sensible man, I had hitherto always insisted on dining at half-past one, and had never received my friends otherwise than at tea and supper, in the plainest of 'plain ways.' If they liked to drop in at such times (and many of them did), we were always delighted to see them, and under these circumstances had many a pleasanter chat and laugh, I dare say, than fall to the lot of grander houses. The very freedom of this kind of visiting, the knowledge that you can come and go when you like, do and talk as you like, and that the more you please yourself the better you will please your host, suit my constitution exactly; and I believe that in liking it I am only one of a vast majority of London gentlemen. For the ladies I dare not speak.

When we went to bed, however, my wife returned to the attack, and did not leave me till she was victorious. Her chief argument now was that we "ought to give Molly a chance; and Molly thought so herself. There was young Kelly looked very sweet at her; but how could we expect a respectable young fellow like him to come forward unless he saw we knew somebody and were not quite out of the pale of good society?"

"My dear," said I, "pray don't put these silly notions into Molly's head. Kelly always seemed to me to be rather spooney on Ellen Vyner and not at all on Molly."

"Ah, the Vyners always try to make out that he is quite devoted to them ; but I flatter myself I know white from black when I see it.—yes, yes, I think so indeed."

"Well, if you really think we ought to give Molly this party," said I, reluctantly.

"Yes, that would be a good excuse for beginning. But I think owe nght to give one every year for the future."

I groaned in spirit and said, "Pray let us get safely over this before we talk of any more. I confess I think the whole notion absurd—the expense, the trouble, the probability of a break-down with such servants as ours. But I suppose you must have your way."

Accordingly, in the morning my wife and two daughters formed themselves into a permanent committee of ways and means. They decided that things could not possibly be got ready under a month, and for the whole of that time, we were in a state of disturbance. First, it was found out that the drawing-room curtains were old and shabby, and we must have new ones ; then, that the dining-room carpet did not suit the furniture—"and you would not wish people to think we have no taste, dear !" said my wife. Now, it was my old book-case that had to be shoved into an unobtrusive corner, where I had to go and hunt for my papers in the dark ; next, one nearly broke one's neck over a new music-stand which had arrived that morning and been left in the passage, "only just for a minute till the carpet was put down ;" then if any friend came in there was scarcely a single place where one could sit down. In a word, all our quiet, homely, comfortable ways were at an end ; and what with upholsterers, carpenters, piano-tuners, and others, it was just as bad as if we were 'flitting.' I was heartily glad, therefore, when they at last declared themselves ready to send out 'the invitations.'

Then the consultations there were about the day and what people we were to ask ! Mr. Disraeli, forming a new cabinet for the government of a fourth part of the world, could not have pondered each name for a longer time, or more anxiously, and I am sure he would not have looked half so gravely important over it. For my part, I watched the proceedings with an amused eye, for my opinion, like an eminent physician's, was only taken as a very last resource.

The first name written down in 'all the lists' was of course Fred Kelly's,—to catch whom (in plain English) our party was given.

I never could quite understand how this young Kelly, who was in the Civil Service, contrived to make so many mothers and daughters run after him. Perhaps (as quantity is often preferred to quality) it was only because there was so much of him, for he stood over six feet ; but then he was as thin as a lath, and nearly as white, with feeble attempts at the "straw-coloured moustache and hay-coloured beard" that Thackeray speaks of. More probably the reason was that he had in perfection the cool Ojibbeway manner of

the man about town—that affectation of stony indifference which passes for the height of fashion in all except the best circles, where people can dare to be natural. He was never genial—never animated—never even interested: indeed, to my mind he was more like a machine, that had been taught to talk a little, than a man; because, to save himself trouble, he seemed to have a pet phrase for everything. All persons below the Civil Service were “Haw, those cads”—the depth of his reprobation was “Not good form, you know”—the height of his approval was expressed by ‘Tol-lol,’ meaning ‘tolerable;’ though once I certainly heard him go so far as to call a thing ‘rather jolly.’ My younger daughter, Patty, who is very observant, used to laugh and say that Kelly was very wise to be lackadaisical about everything, because, as he knew so little, and had no feelings and no ideas, if he was not lackadaisical he would be nothing. And from a pretty long acquaintance with him, I can safely say that, if he had any ideas, he was always admirably successful in concealing them. In a word he was quite the hero of certain modern novelists; and the very difficulty of thawing this fashionable icicle made Molly and several other young ladies attempt the enterprise. But as yet the icicle remained an icicle, and would melt to no warmth they could apply.

Next after Kelly in our common list came the names of the Vyners—father, mother, and two daughters—without whose eyes to observe our success in securing Fred the triumph would scarcely have been complete. All the rich people of our acquaintance followed; singularly enough, there was not a shadow of doubt about any of these, nor about that tawny young idiot Northcoat, who knew the younger son of a lord. Two budding barristers from the Temple were also passed *nem. con.*—“they moved in such good society.” I suggested asking the Prince and Princess of Wales, but found my little joke received (for the first time, I must confess) with chilling silence, as the awful gravity of the occasion required.

There was also a charming unanimity about asking some of our less important acquaintance. Thus poor Miss Graham was asked, because she was so good-natured, and “never objected to play any quantity of dance-music.” Then Tomlins could carve, and Vickers talk so well. Mrs. Grubbins, too, and the three Miss Grubbinses, would be mortally offended if they were left out—so “there was no help for it, we must have them.”

Other names caused more discussion. I was obstinate, when I found my wife and Molly were positively thinking of leaving out my old school-fellow, Dick Wotherspoon—the best of good fellows, only rather rough in his manners, as most of these enthusiastic artists are. It was not, however, on this account so much that my wife disliked him, as the fact that, though over thirty, he seemed to be making no headway at all in life, and was himself beginning to think he had mistaken his profession.

Indeed, he was so poor that I had frequently lent him a five-pound note. But I now overruled my wife's objections to him and insisted on his being invited. With his name our list of forty-five was complete, that number being ten or fifteen people more than our rooms would really hold ; but then, as my wife said "They would be sure, some of them, to be engaged ; and so we might as well have the credit of inviting them all as not."

To be in proper form, we gave a ten days' invitation, and the interval was ruled over by the milliners. From morning to night there was nothing but consultations about blonde and muslin, mauve and magenta, or critical examination of patterns, or 'fittings on.' For my part, I undertook to look after the tea, supper, and attendance, for all of which it was absolutely necessary to contract, since we only kept a fat maid-servant of twenty (whom my wife, on the strength of her being able to boil potatoes hard and reduce mutton chops to cinders, dignified with the name of 'cook') and one little slut of thirteen, scarcely able to lift a slop-pail, whom we called our 'housemaid.'

I must say I never felt myself in such a ludicrously mean position as I did when I was bargaining with the unctuous upholsterer in the next street for a stylish supper on hired dishes, to be handed round by three imitation footmen, being the upholsterer's assistants. The whole thing did seem such a sham, like playing the peacock with borrowed feathers.

The all-important night arrived at last, and the fever of expectation and anxiety which had held my woman-kind all the month reached its height.

Long shall I be in forgetting the preparations and fuss of that dreary evening,—the hurried tea, the laborious dressing, the solemn single knock of the upholsterer's men, like the undertaker bringing a coffin ; the frantic appeals to Sarah to "come and fasten me ;" the rustle of skirts in the passages ; the flying about of distracted cook and housemaid ; the staid methodical movements of the long-visaged waiters. But as the clock struck the fatal hour of nine we were all assembled in state ready for the first comer, my wife buttoning her white kid gloves and still red in the face with her nervousness and exertions. As a proof that her exertions had been attended with some success, I may state that I overheard one of our young barristers telling Northcoat "She looked a very handsome Dutch Venus indeed."

I had scarcely taken my place on the hearth-rug when a loud rattle at the door and a hearty voice in the passage announced the first arrival. "Mr. Wotherspoon!" whispered my wife to me with a touch of annoyance in her tone ; "he at any rate takes care to be punctual—knows no better, I suppose." When he was ushered in by one of the imitation footmen, he took much the same view of our proceedings as I took myself, and began chaffing me in his free and

easy way ; " Well, now, Miller, to think of you coming out in such a swell fashion ! What on earth possessed you to begin giving state-parties, eh ? " But Mrs. Miller—with that increase of dignity which the peach-coloured satin always gives her—cut his audacious levity short by asking sharply, " Well, and why shouldn't we give a party like any one else, Mr.—a—Mr. Wotherspoon ? " The assumed forgetfulness of his name was a masterpiece, and capitally done, considering she had never practised the art of snubbing before. At all events, poor Dick seemed to have the ground taken from under him at once, and he subsided into a corner near Patty, where he seemed to be better welcomed.

But hark ! the roll of wheels—" the brazen thunders of the door "—soon not intermittent, but continuous—and we are presently in the thick of it. Kelly came about ten, a little stiffer than usual ; but not till half-past did the Vyners sweep into the room, Mrs. Vyner overwhelmingly courteous and patronising in her black velvet dress. But she soon contrived (without saying so) to make us understand that she wondered we could venture to invite her, and that she considered it no little condescension on her part to come.

There could be no doubt that my daughter Molly and Ellen Vyner were the prettiest girls in the room. Yet it was amusing to note the difference in their style and appearance. Molly, whose good-natured rosy face above her light blue dress seemed like a cherub's floating in the sky, was radiant, full of life, and sweet as a new-blown rose ; but she was a little too eager to please, and tried too evidently to make everything go off well. Miss Vyner on the other hand—pale, slight, and with finely-chiselled features—moved through the rooms a very statue of dignity and self-possession. Quiet, perfectly well-bred, and polite, she rather discouraged the advances of her admirers, including Kelly ; but her very discouragement seemed only to make them more attentive. If she had a fault, it was that she evidently knew her own value so well ; she might have been a duke's daughter instead of a brewer's—though, indeed, I believe Vyner and many of his business think a brewer or a banker now-a-days a greater grandee than any nobleman.

I am glad to say the party itself, notwithstanding our misgivings, went off without any particular hitch. In fact, it seemed very like thousands of similar affairs given by people of the middle classes who know no better. There was the same stiffness and reserve at first, since in such a miscellaneous gathering very few of the guests were acquainted with each other ; the same gradual thawing as we got up a little dance (which, with hypocrisy that deceived nobody, we pretended to extemporise) ; the same intense heat in the rooms, the same jamming in the doorways, the same forlorn groups in the corners, groups that looked as if they knew they ought to be enjoying themselves and were not.

And, when the novelty of the position wore off, I did not find it very difficult to play the part of host. So I tried to say a pleasant word to any guest that seemed dull, arranged a couple of whist tables for the elderly people, and in fact worked hard generally at amusing everybody. My wife, however, as the hours went on without mishap, grew prouder and prouder of her hired grandeur, and indeed, like old Weller's Shepherd, "swelled wisely" in magnificence of deportment and manner. In my hearing alone she told six different persons that "there were forty-five invited; but unfortunately so many were engaged."

"I think you ought rather to say *fortunately*," replied that disagreeable Mrs. Vyner, as my wife made this remark to her. "My dear Mrs. Miller, how could you get any more people into these rooms? And a crowd is so very unpleasant," she added, fanning herself vigorously.

When I took Mrs. Vyner in to supper she said blandly, "I did not know, Mr. Miller—yes, champagne, please—I never knew before that you kept a footman;" looking hard at one of the upholsterer's mutes.

"Why, he is like Vyner's small ale—for very occasional use only," I replied, determined she should not have all the sarcasms to herself, and knowing she hated any reference to her husband's business.

She took her revenge, however, on my wife by saying to her soon afterwards across the table, "How very nice these whips are, Mrs. Miller! I must get you to give me the receipt." Of course, the odious woman knew very well that the creams, like everything else, were furnished by the upholsterer 'who did for us;' but she succeeded in making my wife blush and feel very uncomfortable for the time.

The dance was kept up with spirit till four or five o'clock, and the young people at any rate, especially my daughters Molly and Patty, enjoyed this part of the business most thoroughly. Towards the end, however, Molly became rather sulky because Fred danced so much with Miss Vyner; and my wife was highly indignant at Dick Wotherspoon's hanging about Patty. Indeed, she would almost have proceeded to open hostilities if I had not stopped her; and, as it was, Wotherspoon evidently guessed her motive in always disturbing his confabulations with Patty, and left early.

When our guests were gone we were soon in bed, from which we did not rise till noon. Even then Patty was very tired, and Molly had a headache—due to Miss Vyner, I suspected. I too was disgusted with the hypocritical pretences and bother of the whole thing. My wife alone was radiant, and thought the party a great success owing to her own admirable management. She was sure, too, that Kelly on leaving had thanked her and pressed her hand with a cordiality most unusual with him; and on this ground she told Molly to take courage, and all would come right.

And her exultation was increased by several of our guests who called in the afternoon and lisped the usual phrases on such occasions.

"Delightful gathering." "Enjoyed ourselves so much." "Quite a success."

When Mrs. Vyner called, however, she threw a little damp on my wife's ardour. She pretended to praise—she was always more malicious when she did that.

"How *very* good of you to take all this trouble—so unexpected, too!" she said. "And how very well you did manage, considering you were quite unaccustomed to this sort of thing! It must have been a most formidable undertaking, I'm sure. And I hope you, Mr. Miller, were not very much behind-hand with your work in consequence."

Generally I could give Mrs. Vyner a Roland for her Oliver, but on the present occasion my conscience sided so much with her in her politely-veiled sarcasms,—I mean, I thought them so just—that I really could only mutter out some common-place answer.

"I'm afraid you are a little tired with your exertions, Mrs. Miller; indeed, they must have been immense," continued the merciless virago, seeing that I was in no mood for reply. "But, I'm sure, it was very kind of you to try so hard to give us a pleasant evening. And as you are such very old friends, I think I may tell you a little secret, just to show you how much we are indebted to you. Ah, I daresay you know what it is. Fred Kelly proposed to Ellen last night, and it is all arranged—so kind of you, I'm sure, to give him the opportunity. And we think it will be a very nice match, don't you, Molly?"

Poor Molly held out till Mrs. Vyner was gone, when she made a rush to her own room, with a tear in each eye. She had scarcely left us when a double knock announced the postman.

"It is from Wotherspoon," I said, opening the letter. "Do you know I think our new splendours, Jane, made you seem a little rude to him yesterday?"

"Ah well! if I am never rude to anyone of more consequence than Mr. Wotherspoon, it will be no great matter," she replied, contemptuously. "But I am grieved and vexed beyond measure about this young Kelly. Ellen Vyner, indeed!"

"Dear me!" said I, as I glanced over Wotherspoon's letter: "you'll like to hear this, I think, Jane." So I read it to her.

"DEAR MILLER,

"I am sorry to be obliged to leave without calling to bid you good-bye, but have just met some friends who are going to Italy, and I have decided to accompany them. As we start to-morrow I am in an awful hurry, and I shall be away at least two years."

"And a very good thing too," interrupted my wife. "Do you know I am quite sure he would have made Patty an offer last night, if I had not looked so well after her that I never gave him the chance? I have always wondered, James, you never would see the depth of that man. However, we shall be safe from him for some time, it seems."

"Quite safe," said I.

"There were one or two things that I particularly wished to tell you last night ; but in such a crowd I had no opportunity, and '—"

"There, I told you, James !" broke in my wife again. "One of those things, you may depend on it, was a proposal, and I'm glad I stopped it."

"All right, only do let me finish :

—"and, to tell you the truth, I was a little nettled (you know I was always too sensitive) because I thought Mrs. Miller last night scarcely treated me with quite the kindness due to an old friend. So I ran away early and did not say what I intended. Perhaps it is as well. One bit of news about me, however, I am sure you will all be glad to hear, and I feel that I ought not to go away without telling you. A few days ago, to my immense delight and astonishment, I received a lawyer's letter informing me that I was heir-at-law to a distant relative who had died in Jamaica ; so that I have dropped all at once into five thousand a year. Rather jolly, isn't it ? But I won't forget all your five-pound notes ; and if ever you want a little cash, old fellow, just you ask your old and obliged friend

"R. WOTHERSPOON."

"Five thousand a year !" groaned my wife now. "But how could I know, James ? Why didn't Mr. Wotherspoon tell us ?"

"Well, probably, dear, because you stopped him so adroitly," said I, laughing maliciously, "and perhaps he first wished to see whether we cared for him without his money ?"

"Oh dear, oh dear ! couldn't I write a note of apology and bring him back ?"

"No ; if I know Wotherspoon, it is too late. As you said, Jane, he is too deep for that."

"Ah well," said she, quite piteously. "And this is all the reward one gets for putting oneself out of the way and going to all this expense to give one's friends a treat."

Our motives, I could not help thinking, had not been quite so disinterested as my wife now wished to make out. Few people do give parties, I fear, on the pure principles of *Pickwickian* benevolence. However, we had got a lesson, and I am happy to say our first evening party was our last.

BRYAN YORKE.

BREAD FROM STONES.

AMONG the "free sights" of London is one that though it may be seen any day between the hours of eight and five in a dozen different parts of London, is not easily discoverable except by the initiated. Nevertheless it is a highly interesting and instructive spectacle, and one which those who take an interest in contemplating curiosities of civilisation should take some pains in seeking out.

In order, however, that the explorer may not be alarmed, should he by chance stumble unexpectedly on the amazing sight, it may be as well to give him an inkling of what it is like. He will find a crowd of men, young and old, hungry looking, and attired in the livery of poverty, busily cracking granite stones with a long-handled hammer. No matter what the weather is, these poor fellows are doomed to work in the open yard, and, to add to their wretched appearance every man wears over his face a mask, such as convicts wear. The mask, however, is merely to keep the stone chips from cutting their faces, and they are not convicts, but destitute persons who have sought a parish loaf and are undergoing Mr. Bumble's "labour test" before they may get it.

It would be difficult to conceive anything more cruel and oppressive in its bearing on the very poor than this "test." Probably, were Mr. Bumble asked concerning it, he would tell you that, whatever its faults or virtues, it was no affair of his; that it was just what the Poor Law Board had made it, and that individually he was but, as it were, custodian of the lever that set the machinery in motion. Therein, however, lies the mischief. The engineer who controls a steam hammer can make it toy with an egg or smash bars of iron to powder as fine as table-salt, and so it is with the parochial functionary to whose discretion the "labour test" and machinery of the Poor Law Board is entrusted. What the said Board doubtless intended, was that when a man applied for relief derived from the pockets of the ratepayers, he should be bound to give practical proof of his assertion that he was quite willing, provided a chance were offered him, to work for the bread himself and his family so sorely needed. Beggars cannot be choosers. Perhaps the nature of the said test was of a kind that nine out of ten of our working population would shrink from, as being, in the extremest degree, mean and degrading; but still, and in view of the well-known fact that in thousands of cases poor-rate is exacted of folks who are very little better than paupers themselves, it was necessary that the test should be

of a stringent sort. Pride and parish bread are so difficult to amalgamate, that for a man's health sake it is as well that he be purged of the one before he takes his fill of the other; and looking the matter fairly in the face, the individual whose lofty spirit revolts from a test of his industrial sincerity, even though it takes the extreme form of converting a bushel of large stones into small ones, is but little entitled to the sympathy of struggling rate-payers. The unfortunate operator may have his own opinion as to the wisdom of his task-masters in setting him at work in so unprofitable a manner, but that clearly is their business, not his. But the grievance is that Mr. Bumble converts the "test" machine into an instrument of torture and tyranny. It appears to be the creed of the estimable official that it is better that ten really unfortunate and honest men shall be made to suffer than that one well-seasoned, idle scamp shall escape, but in the application of even this rough and ready principle the good beadle fails signally. The pith of the whole matter may be briefly explained. A. is an out-of-work weaver with a large family. For years and years A. has sought and obtained a creditable livelihood by means of his trade, but sickness, slackness of trade, unlucky speculations, and what not, have taken the wind out of poor A.'s sails, and he is, in a manner of speaking, bread-and-water-logged and can make no headway at all. At last there is nothing left for it but to beg some temporary relief from the parish in which he has, since he was out of his apprenticeship, lived and paid rates. His application is not refused. He is known to be a respectable old fellow, and if he were not he could bring a handful of documentary evidence in support of the fact, but still he must undergo the labour test. He is offered a ticket for the "labour yard," and may be put to turning the crank to grind corn, or to stone-breaking, or to oakum-picking. Should he at the end of the day come triumphantly out of the test, he will be rewarded with as many two-pound loaves as he has small and hungry children dependent on him. Nothing else. Although with a prodigious amount of pluck, the soft-handed old weaver has handled the stone-breaking hammer all day long, and at the expense of a row of blistered fingers proved himself a good and faithful servant, he gets nothing for his pains but dry bread; not a morsel of cheese, or an ounce of tea and sugar, or a few coals in a bag; nothing but the cold dry parish bread to carry home and break up amongst his youngsters, clamorous for food as young blackbirds. That, however, is scarcely to the purpose; he bargains for the dry bare bread, and he gets it, —provided he prove testworthy.

This is A.; now let us turn to B. B. is a blackguard, an idle dirty ruffian, who hates work so heartily that, were it not out of cowardly dread of pains in his stomach, he would probably rather starve than set his hand to labour. He has not an atom of self-respect, and it does not in the least concern him how much he is beneath even the

contempt of decent people, provided at that depth, whatever it may be, you permit him to be warm. He avoids a prison, partly because of the hateful rules there enforced as regards personal cleanliness, partly because such as his skulking vagabond liberty is, he esteems it. B. spends his time chiefly in the workhouse, and he, like A., the out-o'-work weaver, applies for parish relief. He too receives a ticket for the labour yard. But you don't find reprobate B. wearing the woeful visage of industrious A. The labour test has no terrors for B. He has served a long apprenticeship to every trade in the category, and has become an adept at each, either at "knocking it off" with consummate ease, or at shirking it. If the work is crank work he will shirk it. Who is to tell, when twenty pairs of hands grasp a single bar, who is exerting himself to turn it, and who is merely laying his lazy hands on it, so burdening it with the weight of his useless arms? This is B.'s share in the performance. There are swarms of B.'s about who haunt our workhouses, and these are the tactics adopted by them all. They are in no hurry to get the task of corn-grinding done, that they may quit the parochial premises. They would rather remain there; and so there being, say fifteen of the A. class and five of the B. tasked to grind say twenty bushels of corn in payment for a certain quantity of bread, the industrious fifteen are kept sweating half as long as they would otherwise be, while the five lazy B.'s literally play the whole time, and finally walk off with a big loaf not a crumb of which they have earned.

Although perhaps not so complete, Mr. Bumble's "labour test" is none the less a failure when it is applied to stone-breaking. Here again A. and B. are set to do the same amount of work, but what is a painful and in many cases an absolutely insurmountable task in the case of men of the unfortunate A. class, is quite an easy job for scamps of the B. type. Stone-breaking (and this after all is the "test" most commonly adopted) is a kind of labour at which use and "knack" avail more than sturdy application. It is impossible to watch the operation for so short a time as five minutes without being made aware of this. The man who never in his life before handled a stone hammer makes a sad bungle of cracking lumps of granite. He will labour at a piece, raising the hammer high above his head and bringing it down with force enough to fracture the iron head from the handle and only succeed in chipping little pieces off until he has made the large stone quite smooth and round. B.'s lazy experience has taught him better. He cracks granite stone, with quite as much ease as the reader could crack walnuts. He has acquired the "knack." He knows all about the "grain" of the stone and never wastes so much as a single blow. B.'s are not hard blows by any means. He squats down on a mass of straw or a bit of sack, with a dirty short pipe between his dirtier lips, and dexterously turning the bits he hammers at them, this way and that, and

accumulates a bushel before hard-working A. has chipped enough to fill a quart basin. This is where the system so cruelly fails. In effect, Mr. Bumble says to ruffian B. : "I may not deny you the bread you apply for, but I will take care to set you such a task as shall make you hesitate the next time you contemplate making application ;" and B. grins, and lights his pipe, and in three hours what is regarded as a desperately hard day's work is accomplished. It is only desperately hard work to a poor fellow who, more honourably employed all his previous lifetime, is ignorant how to set about it. It is a rule at some parish stone-yards to pay for nothing short of a certain number of bushels of broken stone, and I was informed by the task-master at Paddington that it was quite a common occurrence for poor fellows who are driven by necessity to that last resort of desperate honesty, the parish labour yard, to begin their job of stone-breaking, to work at it with all their strength from daylight till noon, and then, despairing of completing it in the specified time, to fling down the hammer, and go off as empty and as poor as when they commenced.

The question will arise in one's mind, who is most to blame if a man so circumstanced should turn his unemployed hands to picking and stealing? It must be bitter knowledge to such a man to be aware that crime is more mercifully regarded in this Christian country than unavoidable poverty. That it is a fact, however, may be shown without fear of contradiction. Let us take the "test" of oakum-picking. This consists, as possibly the reader is aware, in shredding to the fineness of the original raw hemp, tightly twisted, tarred, and weather-hardened lengths of worn-out ship's cable. This is often of the thickness of a man's wrist. It forms the staple of prison "hard labour," and prisoners are expected to do the shredding with their bare fingers. Workhouse oakum-pickers are provided with an iron hook, which is attached to the leg above the knee by means of a strap. In prison no such provision is made, but the "hard workers" are ingenious, and for the same purpose usually utilise the iron hook or eye that is let into the walls of their cell for the purpose of swinging the prisoner's hammock at night time. But there is all the difference between hard labour for crime, and hard labour for poverty. In the former case the worker (I am speaking now especially of the Westminster House of Correction, where seven hundred prisoners are constantly incarcerated) does the task in the cell, a well-lit, well-warmed, well-ventilated chamber, grim of aspect only because the vaulted roof and the walls are coated with white-wash, and the window at the end has an iron grating before it. Take away the grating and hang a curtain at the window, stick eighteen-pen'orth of a pretty paper on the walls, and there is many an unfortunate free citizen pays two or three shillings a week for an uglier and more inconvenient abode than a prison cell might thus be

converted into. The prisoner has his stool to sit on, and his allowance of "hard stuff" served out to him; he has nothing to do but sit down in quiet and warmth, and perform his task. If he is an out-and-out and oft-convicted rascal, and consequently well versed in the ways of prison life, and the practice of oakum-picking, he of course finds the task all the easier, and may allow himself an occasional spell of rest, which may be rendered all the more enjoyable by the aid of the sound and entertaining literature of which every well-behaved convict receives his share from the prison library. This, as regards the adept, to whom the shredding of four pounds of tarred rope is quite an easy day's-work;—but some consideration is invariably shown towards those whose fingers are as yet tender in the practice of picking and stealing, and consequently of oakum-picking as well. The rule in such cases is to keep a sharp look-out for skulkers, but at the same time to accept as satisfactory the best that a prisoner can do in a specified time, even though it fall far short of the regulation quantity. But Mister Bumble has no patience with a system so elastic that it may be stretched to the bounds of humanity. In the matter of oakum-picking no less than in that of stones, the line he lays down is a cast-iron line, and no amount of persuasion will tempt it from its rigidity. The Poor Law says, that the able-bodied man or woman who is brought down so low as to be glad of workhouse shelter and to eat workhouse bread shall perform a certain amount of work, as corn-grinding, or stone-breaking, or oakum-picking, as an equivalent. No provision is made as regards the place in which the said work, say oakum-picking, is to be performed; that is left to the discretion of Mr. Bumble, and for humanity's sake I should like the readers of these pages to go and see for themselves the manner in which the great parochial functionary at times fulfils this part of his responsibilities. There is a workhouse in the City Road, and a year since I looked in on the oakum branch of its industry. It was an awfully cold day, snow was baked hard on the ground, a biting nor-east wind was blowing, and from every eave and spout and overhead projection in the workhouse yard hung a spiky festooning of icicles. Under that part of the yard wall that was next the street was the "shed," in which the oakum-pickers were at work. I use the term "shed," not without a consciousness that I am scarcely justified in doing so; the dictionary interpretation of the word being "a shelter made of boards." The erection in question was as far as it went "made of boards," but it was not a "shelter" at all. It was about fifty feet long and ten broad, and except for the uprights that supported the leaky roof, quite open in front. Its floor was earth or mud or snow or whatever the weather willed. As well as at the front the shed was open at the ends, and the keen perishing wind blew through it as though it were a tunnel. Under the shed roof were working perhaps eighty poor wretches, all males, I am happy to state—picking oakum

under the superintendence of a brace of taskmasters. I think I never in all my experience saw so sorry a spectacle. There was not a hale-looking man among the eighty, nor was there, as far as I could see, a single instance of that insolent and devil-may-care defiance with an expression of which the true "rough" contrives to adorn his unlovely visage. The nipping of real poverty was apparent on every bleak face there,—the pinched nose, the blue lips, the eyes that peered out so hungrily from the pits in which famine had sunk them. The variety of costume, too, was proof incontestible of the genuineness of the squalor of these poor fellows. Creatures of the tramp and cadger breeds all wear the same livery. The cut of their coats may be different, the stuff and complexion of their smock-frocks and waistcoats, the style and build of their head coverings, may vary as with other men, but there is an indescribable grimy unctuousness about the whole fraternity, as though the "elbow grease," as it is vulgarly termed, with which for industrial purposes they were originally endowed, checked and perverted from the use designed, had overrun their frames and worked in an unnatural manner out of the pores of their objectionable bodies, and conferring on their garments a kind of dog-eared droop, a lazy limpness that stamps the rascals as what they are. But there was nothing of this about the eighty oakum-pickers under the shed; except that they were shabbier and more forlorn looking, they were one and all just as when they fell out o' work. There was the smut-smirched fustian of the engineer; the clay-begrimed unmentionables of the "navy;" the flannel jacket of the mason, with the white stone dust turned gray, and showing in the seams; the carpenter with his "rule pocket;" and the splashed plasterer. This class of men wore caps as a rule, and certainly their appearance was not so intensely poverty-stricken as those who wore tall hats and what were once black clothes. There were a good many of the last-mentioned class, and, possibly, because they were less used to "roughing it" than were rough-handed out-door working mechanics, they seemed to be the greatest sufferers. Buttoned-up poor fellows, the effort to keep the chest warm in many cases over-taxing the oft-renewed stitches that attached the sleeves to the tender body of the garment; with an old comforter wrapped round their frost-bitten nose and ears, and their knees showing sharply through their thread-bare trousers, and their ill-protected toes benumbing in the slushy floor;—it was enough to melt the heart of a Scrooge to see *them* picking oakum, three pounds weight of it, before they might be permitted to trudge home to their expectant hungry ones with four pounds of dry bread. The wonder was that they were able to use their fingers to pick half the quantity in such a bitterly cold atmosphere. It is true that the luxury of a fire was not denied them. The parish officials were, it seems, alive to the fact that it is physically impossible for half-starved men to stand at work for six or

eight hours in the open air, and with the thermometer marking several degrees below freezing point, without incurring the risk and inconvenience of a series of coroner's inquests on the premises, and so they are graciously pleased to give their poor oakum-pickers permission to have a fire—*provided they purchase the materials themselves*. It is difficult to believe it, but it is a fact. In half-a-dozen parts of this shed, where the poor fellows were heroically toiling at the degrading work set them by their task-masters, that their little children at home might not *quite* starve, there were, perhaps, as many as half-a-dozen little fires burning in grates extemporised out of old saucepans and kettles, and frying-pans, the more opulent of the oakum-pickers subscribing a halfpenny each to purchase the necessary coke. It was found, I believe, to "pay" in the long run, it being found that very often a poor fellow's fingers would grow so stiff and frozen that he was quite unable to pick the stipulated quantity, in which case he got a two instead of a four-pound loaf. I learnt, too, that it was not the poor out-of-work clerks and tailors who most frequently failed. Although it was quite common to see them working with bleeding fingers, their hands were nimble, and they managed somehow to battle through. It was the horny-palmed blunt-fingered fellows, whose trade involved the use of heavy hammers and iron chisels, who found the delicate process of separating the fine fibres most difficult.

Such work as oakum-picking must be little short of torture to stalwart broad-shouldered men. But it would seem to be part of Mr. Bumble's plan to convince those who are so reduced as to apply to him for aid, that it is all a mistake to avoid the ways of dishonesty because of the shameful and degrading penalties attaching to detection, and to prove to them that the maxim, "honesty is the best policy," holds good only as far as the threshold of the relieving officer's door. At that point Mr. Bumble meets him and in effect argues the matter. "You have, it appears, somehow or other brought yourself to this alternative, my man," says he, "either to commit an act of theft and be sent to prison, or continue to cling to the skirts of honesty, and be content to eat its bread, even though you have to grind it out of the crank, or hammer it out of granite, or shred it out of old ship's cable as hard as wood. Take notice, however, you are altogether in error if you expect that your virtue will be recognised, and rewards for it, dealt out at this shop. Since you regard honesty as such a precious possession that you are resolved to indulge in it at any cost, you, of course, will not object to pay what will be exacted of you. Not the slightest respect will be paid to your ridiculous threadbare respectability. On the contrary, you will find that you will get on much better if you strangle it with the very first strand of hemp you may unreeve from your oakum, and accommodate yourself to the behaviour and language of the ruffians who possibly may be your workmates. You will be expected to do

prison-work without a tenth part of prison-comfort. Should you find yourself too feeble to execute the task set you, you will be regarded as a skulker and punished accordingly, and you will not get a mouthful of anything to eat, though for lack of our bounty you work fasting from morning till night. Even when by eight hours' labour you have earned eight-pennyworth of bread there may be some delay—perhaps an hour or two, in delivering it to you. These are our terms, and they will be rigorously adhered to. It is not for me to point out the superior attractions of the rival establishment on the other side of the way, or to hint that as regards the stone walls and the fetters so conspicuously displayed over the strong door, that there is, as the saying is, 'nothing of the bear about it excepting the hide.' You know how to qualify yourself for residence there. You will find a ticket of admittance in the first strange coat-tail pocket into which you may venture to thrust your hand; it is much easier to obtain than a parish order for the stone-yard or the oakum-shed, and the substantial benefits it will entitle you to, as compared with *our* ticket, must be experienced to be believed. Your work will be light, you will every day of your life be served with hot and plentiful meals, your bed will be a warm and comfortable one, a medical man will look after your health, and a minister of religion will attend you every day, as well as Sundays at chapel, and take strict care of your spiritual welfare. You will be able to enjoy hot baths and cold baths, and your private apartment will contain a bookshelf, which will be replenished as you desire. All these worldly comforts you may make your own by becoming a thief; but if you *will* persist in your confounded honesty, I have already told you how you will be made to suffer for it."

JAMES GREENWOOD.

MARGARET AND ELIZABETH.

By KATHERINE SAUNDERS,
AUTHOR OF "GIDEON'S ROCK."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NIGHT.

WHEN Margaret said "He is there ; he sees me now !" the widow Vandereck kept back in the shadow, and maintained a guilty silence.

The ragged fringe of fishing-nets, with bits of cork dangling, hangs down over the window, and sways to and fro in the damp, sleepy gusts of night air. The high tide roars in the darkness without ; the children breathe placidly within. Elizabeth Vandereck stands at her little altar, her finger on her lips, her great moist eyes looking upwards.

"Cruel !" cries poor Margaret, and falls prone upon the floor.

Then comes a fumbling at the door-latch. Elizabeth, in a tumult of joy, fear, and bewilderment, runs to it, then to Margaret, then back again to the door, and lets in a poor craven creature, with his hair hanging over his haggard face.

The widow snatches at one of his hard, cold hands, and drags him to where Margaret lies faint unto death, but conscious still. They raise her between them.

She gives a great shiver when she sees him, and clings fast to Elizabeth, and Hector staggers back—sits heavily down in a chair, and looks at his great hands as he clasps them before him, as though he thought Margaret has seen Kennedy's blood upon them.

"Hector," says the widow, standing before him, with Margaret's face upon her shoulder, "why do you shrink from this woman, who has no kith or kin in the world to own her, save you ? Why do you not take your wife to your bosom ? She is as good as gold—as gold tried seven times in the fire. I will tell you, Hector, what she came to tell you on that night."

"You lie !"

"As I am a poor woman, trusting to God's mercy for my daily bread, I speak the truth. She came to tell you the good and blessed truth, man. As how she was met that day by the man she'd loved so dear. How he'd met her to punish her for being untrue to him,

and so good to *you*, by proving to her he'd all along been faithful to her, poor girl as she was, and out of all sight of *his* station."

"And *she* believed *that* tale," said Hector with a fierce laugh.

"Believed it, yes," answered Elizabeth; "but as it's a tale as takes a right down good heart to believe, no wonder if *you* doubt it, Hector Browne. So he showed her the marriage lines, all in black and white, I say, and she—why think of it yourself, Hector—how you'd all scared her very heart. You sailors are a rough set, remember. Ah, but you are, though I say it as shouldn't, God bless you! Well, there it is—would any poor scared bird as sees its cage door open not flutter to it, giddy at the thought to get free? 'Save me,' she says to him. Could any heart refuse her in that awful minute, Hector Browne? Beside themselves they drove away; but then they remembered their duty to you and themselves, and the Almighty, whose blessed eye, you see, was on 'em all the time. Without a kiss—even one such as we might give the dead—they parted never again to meet."

Hector went towards Margaret a few steps, but started back, muttering fiercely to the widow,—

"Why,—O confound your glib tongue, woman!—why have you me *now*?"

"Back she goes," continued Elizabeth's glad, ringing voice, "with but one hope in the world to keep hope in her poor heart, and reason in her head, and that was forgiveness from——"

"Her husband," sobs Margaret, falling on her knees at Hector's feet.

"Miles and miles in the dark," goes on Elizabeth, "she runs to reach you, leaving sin and its wages of gold and dross, of ease and misery, behind her. She comes to your door seeking mercy,—forgiveness; she finds a madman brooding over thoughts of vengeance. Her heart fails her, and she turns and flies away—far as her feet will bear her. Oh! 'twas a mercy she did not perish in my Joshua's grave—the sea—by which she ran till she reached our weir; and oh!—oh!—oh!"—the widow burst into sobs—"I found the blessed babes a-burying her with sand. Ah laws, this world! Let us go headlong on the road to sin and it provides for us; but woe, woe unto those that turn back, for they are cast off alike by the righteous and the unrighteous, even as this poor woman is cast off. Hector Browne, I have said my say. I am known in these parts for an honest, God-fearing woman—do you dare look me in the face and doubt what I have told?"

The craven head, still bowed, was shaken; and it gave no other answer.

Yes. He understands. She is the same as when she stood among the lilacs in the garden of the Bluejacket, and he cut the blossoms and filled her apron with them; and as when she held her cold little hand out to all his mates of the Lovely Nancy; as when she flushed.

and paled at the riotous wedding feast. He knew it. Many a remembrance came to mind verifying Elizabeth Vandereck. He had been to the inn where she and Kennedy stopped, and had heard something there that puzzled him—besides that cry outside the door that night. Oh, yes! he sees all now.

What business has he here with these two good, holy women and these innocent sleeping children?

Oh, what a craven shake of the head it was that answered Elizabeth's question! He dared not look up, lest the devil that moved his hand against Kennedy should grin at them in triumph from his eyes; or speak, lest it should laugh out in his voice. So he only cowered and shook his head.

"Hector, is it so?" says a voice that is once more purest music to his ear. "Do you believe this much good of me?"

"Ah!"

He starts up with almost a shout.

She has touched with her soft cheek the hand that smote Kennedy. Had she felt the stain of his blood upon it?

He stood staring at her wildly, fearfully, as if he expected to see her wet eyes flame with anger; then turned and fled from the house, with little less than a murderer's anguish and fear in his soul.

"My sister, all is well," says Elizabeth, taking Margaret in her arms.

"How, 'Lizbeth?" sobs Margaret. "He looked mad, fearful."

"And don't you see why?" asks the widow. "Your husband, Margaret, has a great heart; and great hearts suffer greatly for their mistakes. He sees now how he has mistaken you, and the knowledge has, for the time, maddened him. He feels himself unworthy to touch your hand or offer the forgiveness you ask."

"Oh, 'Lizbeth! and you think this is so!"

"I am convinced. I saw it in his face and manner as he went out, and my heart ached for him. It was this, and nothing else."

When the widow's judgment erred, it was generally on the safest—that is to say, the kindest—side.

"But, 'Lizbeth, what can be done now?"

"Your duty is clear, Margaret," says Elizabeth; "you must go to your rightful home to-morrow morning; and, since you know he feels the wrong now all on his side, insist on staying there."

"Even if I *could* do that, how, Liz, could I meet his mother after all she's suffered through me?"

"Margaret, you are *all* he has in the world now."

Then Elizabeth told her how bitterly Hector had made known to her that loss for which he blamed himself in words too hard to be repeated.

Before they slept Margaret agreed to act upon Elizabeth's advice.

CHAPTER XII.

AT SUNRISE.

As the newly-risen sun shone over Wrexham Bay there was, at an unusually early hour, an eye wakeful and tenderly observant of every beauty that arose at its touch in the grey sea or on the curved line of coast. It was the eye of Hector who sat on the doorstep of a solitary grey cottage on the cliff at the left of the bay, taking his last farewell.

An isolated and dreary position it looked from the town below. The cliff was black, barren, and steep, and had a peak-shaped summit, from which it derived its name of Pin Point. This one cottage was situated on a sort of ledge facing the sea, and having the peak-shaped summit on the north.

The cottage itself was anything but dreary looking. It was built of shining stones, whose corners glittered like diamonds in the sun; and, though scarcely a flower or blade of grass was to be seen on Pin Point, the cottage was almost encircled by an abundant border of a pretty sea-loving plant.

Hector, dressed in new sailor's clothes, sat looking down on the broad bay, the crowded little harbour, and the town.

It was early—the whole scene below him was awakening slowly, and with a sort of lazy reluctance.

There was a distant crashing sound of fishermen's feet on the beach stones—a bustle—a faint shouting—and a wagging to and fro of crowded masts in the harbour. The terraces of houses facing the sea shone dazzlingly white, but seemed still to sleep; while from the heart of the town a thousand little spires of smoke arose and mingled into one great blue vapoury cloud that hovered over Wrexham with obstinate persistency, and would not be dispersed either by the fresh sprayey gusts from the sea or the sweet-scented breezes from inland fields.

The sea looked fresh and crisp. The tide was coming in; the rounded billows, large, green, and full-voiced, took possession of the shore like unchallenged conquerors. A distant sail shone and fluttered like the wing of some white bird held captive by a monster of the deep. It was a glorious morning, and the sailor's dark eyes roved from one beauty to another of the scene below him, remembering how like it was to that which had so deluded him on his wedding-day, when its loveliness had seemed peculiarly his—his very own; as if it were *his* happiness which made the billows shout and the sea-gulls reel with such wild delight in the sunshine; that made the sands so fair and yellow—the heavens themselves so warm, and wide, and blue.

As his eye rested on the old smoke-covered town and the black tarred fishermen's cottages that lay between it and Pin Point, a form

in the distance caught his eye that made him suddenly start, and conceal himself within the cottage.

That same morning Elizabeth Vandereck had stood at her door, waving her blue flannel apron to a figure far along the sands—a figure that kept turning to look back, and that sometimes began to retrace her steps in the direction of the widow's cottage. But no sooner did Elizabeth see this than she stayed further advance towards her by holding up her hand, palm outwards, and signing it back.

Her little ones stood on either side the widow, holding by her gown, and crying in its folds at Margaret's departure.

But they soon discovered that playing at hide-and-seek round their inattentive mother was better fun than crying; and Elizabeth, when the figure had disappeared round the cliffs, stopped her signalling and signing, wiped away her tears, snatched a tiny hand in each of hers, and ran with them across the sands; for the men were at the weir, and she must go bargain for some fish.

Meanwhile Margaret ascends the cliff down which she rushed with such wild and reckless feet that terrible night.

It is a golden October morning. The rocky path is dry and warm. Every rugged peak and sharp angle looks full of grace and beauty in the soft brightness.

As she mounts higher and looks down on Wrexham, town there is the same black cloud of smoke which Hector watched now gradually growing thin and blue.

There is the garden of the Bluejacket bright with china asters and freshly-painted palings, and there, too, is Margaret's little sister feeding the fowls in the little yard under the lilac-trees.

Far inland, Margaret, without looking toward them, knows just where a belt of trees encircles Darnley Chase. She knows that the last touch of pure gold lingers on the oaks; but her eye passes blindly over this; she will not suffer it to see, though her mind sees all so clearly.

And now here is the cottage, glittering all over. Pulse, step, vision seem to fail her. She sets her pale lips firmly and looks up.

No smoke issues from the chimneys; the windows are all shut; the blinds down; probably have been so since the hands that laid out the corpse of Hector's mother arranged the place. Perhaps no one is there.

Somehow a strange faith in the widow Vandereck's instinct makes Margaret strongly doubt this fact. For the second time in her life—is it also to be for the last time?—she knocks at that door.

She waits breathless.

She has not been heard. It must be then—the place is deserted. She touches the latch, the door opens readily, she approaches her ear, and feels as if the beating of her heart must be heard within.

There is a heavy step above ; a step pacing monotonously from end to end of the little upper chamber.

Margaret listens to it a minute or two, lays her hand to her side, and glides in with the sunshine.

She faces first the room that had been made so bright and trim for her on her wedding-day. A cry, that she had but just time to stifle, rises in her throat at the sight of it now.

What a change ! The coffin dust is on the floor. Two chairs stand in the centre, apart from each other. Well does Margaret know to what use these have last been put. Well she knows whose coffin rested on them—whose act gave that coffin its occupant. Hector has no longer a mother.

A passion of remorse, quiet but strong, takes away all fear now from her full heart. She sets to work with all her little strength, purging the room with water, air, sunshine, and many a bitter tear.

And still keeps on the dull monotonous step above. At last it pauses suddenly. Margaret too stands still. Has he heard ? Is he listening ?

In her suspense she can still glance with a surprised and thankful eye on the effect of her hasty labours. The clean, sunny room ; the bright fire ; the breakfast, with its dainties from the widow's well-filled basket ; the great bunch of monthly roses Elizabeth had crammed in at the top, with the lettuces. Altogether, the sight gives Margaret's timorous heart comfort. It seems as if some supernatural power had helped her.

What shall she do ? She hears him on the stairs. What can she think of to say ? Nothing. She must, as Elizabeth said, "leave all to God."

She sees him as he stands a minute at the foot of the stairs, before he looks into the room. His swarthy face is bright ; his dark eyes have a tender gleam in them. He is dressed as if ready for a journey, and has a bundle tied in a handkerchief in his hand.

He stands at the door. The sunshine falls aslant into the room. Across it their eyes meet.

He did not start, but looked puzzled, bewildered, uncertain. He appeared to be asking himself if this could be one of the dreams which he had so often dreamt in this room before his marriage. Would it not all fade away in another instant ? That face, so pale, and sweet, and yearning ? the fresh pink roses ? the sunshine ?

Would not the two chairs stand there again in their sad significance, and the coffin dust be upon the floor ; and the darkness and death-odours in the air, now so fresh and bright ?

As a dream the sight moves him ; but when the reality flashes on him it is very different.

In such a rush of amazement, joy, hope, he forgets his fears of last

night, his crime, the chance of Margaret's some time knowing of that crime; he forgets all but the beauty and warmth she has brought into the house; the sweet kindliness of her face as she smiles at him tearfully.

She comes to him and lays one little hand on his arm, the other on the handkerchief-bundle that he holds, and looks up in his face with entreaty sweet and grave.

He cannot clearly define to himself what there is in that look, but it fills him with a strange joy and light which shows itself in his face and makes Margaret feel conscious for the first time that her strange sailor-lover is handsomer than anyone she ever saw.

Somehow this causes her to feel suddenly as timid and abashed as if their courtship were but just beginning. Hector watches her face, wet and bright like a flower in April—watches all its changes with wild, passionate eyes.

"Hector!"

"Ay, what now?" says Hector, with strong control over his voice. "What does the girl come and lay her little hand on my bundle for, when I'm just off to be out of her way for ever?"

Margaret, with a sort of tender jealousy, snatches away his bundle and throws it to one side.

"Give it back!" says Hector, in a hoarse, half-laughing voice. "Tis my baggage, lass. Give it back!"

And he holds his great brown hand for it.

"Hector," answers Margaret, "you don't want it now."

She has taken the outstretched hand in one of hers, and with the other plays with his loose jacket-cuff, folding it in little plaits over his brawny wrist.

"Why don't I want it now?" inquires Hector, putting his disengaged arm round her, and looking attentively at the plaiting.

"Because—because it's all altered now, Hector," replies Margaret, plaiting industriously.

"Why is it altered now?"

"Because—oh, you know—because we understood all last night, and—and forgave each other all. You—ah! yes, I saw that you forgave me my wrong to you, and I you for judging me too cruelly. It is altered now because of this, and because"—

"Well?"

"Because," she answers, faintly, "that which God hath joined together"—she stops, sobbing painfully.

His arm clings round her with a more supporting and tender grasp, but still a half-timid, half-hesitating one.

"Well, lass," he whispers, "they which have been joined together"—

"Hector, they should be together always. Oh! you remember the words! I saw how beautiful they were to you when you held my

hand in the church, and when my heart was too cold to be touched by them. But I have thought of them since. Yes; by night and day I have heard them in my ears as you said them so truly and lovingly, and I have wished—oh, how I have wished!—that all since might be a dream, and that I might be standing by you in that church again, listening to those words, and that I might answer them as—as I could answer them now!”

“A dream! a dream!” murmured Hector, while some terrible emotion swept across his face.

The little fingers plaiting the cuff-work more nervously and tremblingly than ever. Hector has not yet dared trust himself to speak to her, lest he should lose the deep delight he has had in listening to her.

Suddenly she pushes aside the cuff and great hand, and, pointing towards the table and smiling through her tears, says,—

“Hector, shall it not be all a dream? Look; I have spread our wedding breakfast. May we not forget all the bitterness that has passed our lips, and eat of this bread as the first that we have broken since our marriage?”

Surprise as well as great joy holds Hector speechless. He gazes on her as she stands there, in her humble fishwife's dress, made in the style of Elizabeth Vandereck's, inviting him with a gesture so full of sweetness and grace to eat of the meal she has prepared. He has known her only as a passive, gentle girl, sweet-tempered and patient, but very silent, very calm, and passionless. Every blush, hot tear, and thrilling tone, and bursting sob has been a revelation to him, causing him strange wonder, strange delight.

“Who is this?” he says, suddenly, half laughing to conceal the unsteadiness of his voice. “This is not my girl—my white-faced Maggie Dawson! Who is it that looks like a princess and yet speaks to me as if I were a king? Who are you? You trim fishwife, with your neat breakfast and white neckercher? you soft lady, with your sweet tongue? you mermaid, with your shining eyes? Who are you, I say? for I'll be hanged if I know you.”

“Who am I, Hector?” says Margaret, coming to him. “Oh! may I, may I say—your wife?”

“My wife!” cries Hector, laying his hands on her shoulders and looking down into her upturned eyes. “What! all three of you—lady, fishwife, mermaid, and all?” And he laughs again, that laugh which has so much more than mirth in it. “Well, I scarce know which I could do best without, since ye've all been at me together. So come, sweet-tongued lady; this for you!” And he takes her hand and kisses it, as if it were a queen's. “And little fishwife;” and he kisses her in hearty, sailor fashion. “But, oh! mermaid, with your shining eyes,” he says, taking her face in both his hands, “don't you know that the sight of you is dead against a sailor's luck?”

"Then throw the mermaid overboard," say Margaret's smiling lips.

"Nay, nay! I love her best of all—the guileless thing! I'll take her and her mischief with the rest."

"But, Hector, Hector!" cries Margaret, with her arms about his neck, "call your three sweethearts by one dear name."

"Margaret!"

"It is sweet to hear you say it so; but not that name, Hector."

"Maggie?"

"No, no! Oh! never that!" she cries, shudderingly. Was it not the name by which *he* had called her?

"My wife!" says Hector, folding her closer against his heart.

Margaret answers by drawing the dark face down to hers.

"Oh! may God forgive us all, and bless us! My dear! my dear!"

CHAPTER XIII.

SMOLDERING FIRE.

MARGARET, as she invited Hector to her little wedding breakfast, had said, "May we not forget all the bitterness that has passed our lips, and eat of this bread as the first that we have broken since our marriage?" And they asked a blessing on it, and did eat, even as she had said, and, in the glow of their love and new hope, the bread was sweet to them.

And from that time they strove together, with a plodding, gentle patience to overcome their difficulties, but their path was very rough.

She soon saw that some impenetrable cloud overhung Hector. He never spoke to her of it, but worked on with a kind of despairing patience that was inexpressibly saddening. No act or tone of violence ever jarred their relations. He was to her kind, unselfish, but so undemonstrative as to make her often doubt his love. He would, often unknown to his wife, go fasting, that she might have enough to eat; and Margaret kept dry, cheerful eyes in his presence, but wept many tears unseen, and would, sometimes, as she sat with her sewing, or lay thinking in the night, stretch out her hands, with silent, passionate words of prayer, as though she would ward off something that she saw coming nearer and still nearer, even while she could only guess in her secret soul at its nature, for she dared ask no question.

For two long years she watched it as it smouldered, and kept prayerful guard over it; but at last the dreaded touch, the awakening breath, came; and it arose from its ashes.

The sun has gone done and left the horizon on fire, the sea cold and grey, the Wrexham hills gaunt and stark. The waves break upon the

beach with a hard rattling sound. The black, naked trees overhanging the cliffs seem to have been turned to iron while contorted with agony.

The shops in the town are gay with Christmas stores, but it is too cold for passers-by to linger at them; and the windows are all misty, and the lights have wrapt themselves in little cloaks of fog till each looks like a silkworm cocoon.

It is very smoky in Rope-walk this afternoon, for every black little hovel has a large fire, and so poor a chimney that the smoke prefers making its exit at the window and door.

The fishermen, as if liking the smoke so much they must needs make more of it, are standing at their doors with their pipes, looking at the crimson blotch across the sea, the harbour, with its mastheads, still as death, far away to the right, and the troops of snow-clouds rolling up from the horizon on their left.

By-and-by a footstep is heard between the breaking of the waves, and there enters Rope-walk a figure well known there.

It is a man whose misfortunes have become a by-word in the town.

The fishermen's wives in Rope-walk look after him, as he passes, with a gaze of mingled pity and contempt, and their eyes twinkle with a quiet satisfaction as they turn them from him to their own helpmates. The men also scan him and his poor clothes with ill-concealed sneers.

"He's a big chap for such a poor crittur," whispers one.

The object of their contempt has his eyes mostly fixed on the ground, but now and then they are raised towards a light high on the cliff before him—a light in the window of the solitary cottage there.

A little barefooted girl runs out and makes grimaces behind his back to amuse the neighbours, and many a scarce-smothered titter and gruff "Haw! haw!" applauds her wit as she drawls out, with a saucy look round her,—

"Gie's a penny, master!"

The laugh subsides a little as the Herculean form stops and turns round upon her with a dangerous, strange look, and the mother of the little girl begins to square her elbows and make ready to fly to the defence. She soon sees there is no cause for alarm.

"A penny, eh! my little maid?" says a deep but not unmusical voice. "Let's see if we can find one. There we are."

The child stares, but does not fail to clutch in her red fingers the unexpected gift.

No sooner does the man turn his back upon her again than she begins to bawl after him a series of epithets with which he is usually greeted in these parts. She is soon joined by a score of other little shrill voices all calling out together,—

"Good-night, old out o' work!" "Good-night, lubber luckless!" "Good-night, rags and bones!"

The man draws his patched sailor's shirt closer over his chest with his thin hand, and turns round upon the sharp little battery of voices fiercely, but as he stands his anger seems to die away.

"Good-night, my little friends!" he shouts; "a merry Christmas to you, and lots o' luck!"

The men look at one another with a smile of contempt as the poor wretch goes toiling up the cliff.

There is many an unlucky man in the town, but not one so utterly contemptible in their eyes as this man. He bears his ill luck so patiently—he never makes a virtue of necessity by spending his spare hours with more fortunate mates at the Mast and Anchor or the Mariner's Welcome. They say of him that "he works as hard out of work as in work;" and truly, if plodding in all weathers hither and thither in search of that which seems to fly from him as men fly from a pestilence, if this be working, Hector Browne works hard.

For two years—the first two years of his marriage life—it has seemed as if fate were against him. He has turned his hand to many things, and none have brought him any good, save bare means to live.

This very afternoon the Widow Vandereck came over from Eastweir to drink tea with Margaret Browne, and she is there now, and has trimmed the candle that is lighting Hector home.

"What a pity," said Margaret, heartily glad to see she was alone, "you have not brought the children!"

"My sister," answered the widow, quietly, "you know very well that your husband is vexed when they come; and you, seeing him vexed, are sad; and I, out of patience with both of you at your bad taste, am cross to the darlings—so it's no treat for them to come. They like going to Uncle Transom's much better, so I have let him have them this afternoon in return for the loan of a book for you. There, that will do you more good than sitting here reading the fire. Where's your husband?"

"He's gone to Headford," Margaret answered, in a cheerful, careless tone, as though Hector's expedition was not of the slightest importance.

The truth was she felt a little pained by Elizabeth's manner.

"Out of work again?" asked Elizabeth, simply.

Margaret's hand trembled as she poured out the tea.

"But I needn't ask," added Elizabeth; "he always is. I never saw such an unlucky man in my life."

A mist came over Margaret's brown eyes. She stirred her tea, bending attentively over it.

"I fear, 'Lizbeth," said she, gently, "you are getting tired of our bad luck."

"Yes, that I am; out of all manner of patience; and"—turning to

the glow of the fire, with tears glittering in her eyes, and a sweet smile of sympathy on her lips, "if I am, oh! my dear! what must you be?"

It was sweet to one that suffered to see such a large wholesome pity as looked from the widow's comely face, and showed itself in her very attitude as she leaned forward with half-extended arms, her large queenly shoulders heaving. She might have satisfied a sculptor's dream for a figure of charity.

It was not possible for Margaret to accept such sympathy with half a heart. She dropped quietly on her knees and laid her head on the widow's lap.

"Oh! 'Lizabeth, 'Lizabeth! it is wearing his very heart out. Is fate against us? *What is it?*"

'Lizabeth had consulted the minister of the little Methodist chapel at Eastweir, as to the continued ill-luck of Hector Browne. She thought now that the best she could do would be to give Margaret *his* solution of the matter.

"I fear, Margaret," said she, solemnly, "the Lord is not with thy husband."

"'Lizabeth," said Margaret, rising, "that is not like you. Was it Job's fault that he was persecuted?"

Elizabeth sipped her tea with a puzzled air, then suddenly forgetting the minister, and speaking out of her own heart said,—

"Ah laws, this world! What ails it that a man like Hector must go a-begging for work he is so clever at? Tell me true, child—is it that evil temper of his that breaks out now and then and ruins him?"

"Nay, 'Lizabeth; I tell you he scarce has any spirit at all. It breaks my heart to see him bear his disappointments as he does."

"Answer me, Maggie," says Elizabeth, looking straight at her with her full blue eyes, "is he kind to *you*?"

"Kind?" answered Margaret, with strange, dreamy sadness. "Yes; he is kind."

"Well?"

Her eyes filled with tears.

"'Lizabeth, he is unselfish and gentle—nothing makes him angry, and nothing that I can do gives him pleasure. I don't know what it is, 'Lizabeth, but there's something gone—there's something gone; is it his love for me, I wonder?"

"Nonsense, child," answered Elizabeth; "why, I never come here but what he follows me out and besets me with questions about you. Do I think you look paler? do I think such a dull life is bad for you? will I try and come oftener? will I persuade you to buy a warmer shawl? will I get you some more books from my uncle Transom's? Why, Margaret, he worships the very ground you tread on."

"We used to be so happy," sighed Margaret; "this time last year it seemed as if we could feel nothing the world could do to us. But now it is as if his heart had been worn to death; I can neither anger nor comfort him."

"Why don't you tell him that there will soon be another mouth to fill?" said the widow; "that would bring his heart alive again, I'll warrant."

"I fear, 'Lizbeth," answered Margaret, wearily, "it will be but little joy to him to hear that there will soon be another as weak and helpless as myself to provide for."

"Hark!" says Elizabeth; and Margaret pushes away her cup, and looks pale and anxious, for the step up the rocky garden path is heavier than usual, she thinks.

Elizabeth watches her as she opens the door, sees her wistful, questioning glance, and Hector's sad shake of the head.

Elizabeth herself gets up and moves about with a pleasant flutter and excitement, taking Hector's arm and making him sit in her own chair, putting a cup of hot tea in his hand. Hector smiles. He has not done so for many a weary week.

"Why, 'Lizbeth," says he, "you welcome me as if I'd come from sea out o' the jaws of a nor'-easter."

"God bless ye, mate!" answers Elizabeth; "you've been fighting against rougher stuff than water or wind either."

She notices he hardly speaks to Margaret, who moves about waiting upon him throughout the meal, which, thanks to the widow's great basket, is not so meagre as usual.

But Elizabeth also notices how his eye kindles as it falls on the book she has brought, and what a grateful look he gives her; and she knows, too, he does not care for books himself, and that his pleasure is for Margaret's sake.

She sees these things, and from them, and from many besides, judges that Hector's love for Margaret is as strong as ever. But she determines to try it a little further that evening.

She has put on her bonnet and shawl, and is wishing Margaret good-bye.

"You will come again soon?" says Margaret, her little hand clinging to Elizabeth's wrist.

Hector's face darkens a little at the earnestness of her voice. Elizabeth sees this.

She goes to the table to take up her basket.

"Look, Hector," she says, in a low tone, and pointing to the candle, "there is a gift coming to you. I saw two bright specks like that in my candle not long before my Gracie and Addie were born."

Hector, who is waiting to see her down the cliff, says nothing, but opens the door, and Elizabeth takes her basket and follows him.

For the first few steps they take in the darkness poor Elizabeth trembles from head to foot, fearful of some surly or violent answer. Has she done wrong, she wonders? Will the news be a terrible blow to him at such a time of poverty and hopelessness?

They have not gone many steps down the dangerous side of the rock, when such a grip as she never felt before is laid on her arm.

"Lizbeth, what did you mean, what did you mean with your nonsense about the candle?"

Elizabeth is frightened; but stopping, and looking at Hector with her full, courageous eyes, answers,—

"I mean, Hector, that next year I can bring my children when I come to see you, as there will be a little playmate here for them."

Elizabeth's arm receives a harder grip, her cheek a hearty sailor's kiss.

"Tell that to Joshua, when you meet him in heaven, 'Lizbeth; and if he can't forgive, he's not as happy as I am at this instant. Good-night, you blessed woman, good-night! By the Lord! I'll find work yet. Good-night!"

And he leaves her to make the best of her way alone down the dangerous steep, altogether forgetting what he came out for.

Slinging her basket on her umbrella, and her umbrella across her shoulder, the Widow Vandereck smiles and shakes her head after him, and turns homeward with a stout heart, fearless, and full of sweet thoughts, for her way lies all along by that which she calls Joshua's grave, where the misty watch-lights are being kindled, and the grand night-anthem sung.

Hector hurries back towards the open door of the cottage, his heart throbbing with a joy deep and holy. But Margaret is never to know of that joy, never till miles and miles of sea have been traversed by him again and again; never, no never, till the babe unborn shall be able to stand with the help of the mother's finger, and lisp its first prayer for "poor daddy."

Yet the cottage door is open: he is within a few steps of it, yearning to pour his joy and love at Margaret's feet. What can stay him?

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNAPPRECIATED HERO.

A FAMILIAR voice, as guttural and hoarse as a voice could possibly be to have yet one touch of music left in it, bursts suddenly through the darkness, and holds Hector fixed to the spot where it first reaches him.

It is a little way down the cliff on the Wrexham side, and is accompanied by blundering, sliding, drunken-sounding footsteps.

"Many changes have I seen,
Over many lands I've been,
And I've larned a thing or two in my time."

Here a stumbling and sliding, and a few select saltwater oaths interrupted the song, which was, however, presently resumed with increased vigour.

"I never knew a knave
Who went happy to the grave,
Or reached the mountain top he thought to climb."

"So it seems," mutters the singer, after another stumble. "That song's getting —— personal ; I'll try another."

"Shrouded in a hammock glory
Celebrates the falling brave."

"That's personal, too."

"Oh, how many famed in story
Sleep below the ocean's wave !"

"I'd prefer a mate's hammock to-night, though."

"Bring the can, boys, let us fill it ;
Shall we shun the fight ? Oh, no ;
Ev'ry bullet has its billet,
Man the boat, boys, yeo, heave, yeo !"

"Yeo, heave, yeo !" roars Hector, in his tremendous voice, and adds, with one of the oaths with which the singer has refreshed his memory, "I'll be —— if that ar'n't Ranting Will."

"What's in a name ? Give us a paw, messmate. By these bruised shins, I hope you've stranded your little craft high and dry enough. Yeo, heave, yeo !"

With Hector's powerful assistance, Ranting Will was soon standing on level ground beside his old shipmate and cousin, whose hand he gripped and shook with genuine affection.

Hector also felt how much stronger was the friendship between them than he had dreamed.

The hard hands clung together fast and long, like two pieces of iron to the magnet.

"I am glad to see you, old chap," said Will, still working Hector's hand up and down like a pump-handle, till from the very exercise the water stood in the eyes of each. "I'm hearty glad to see you. I hear the world ain't used you well, splinter its rotten timbers !"

Hector's hand relaxed, and fell limp. A blackness and bitterness as of death filled his very soul.

All his hopes, all his wild ambitions, had been known to Will. By the time that the Lovely Nancy returned from her long Indian voyage he was to have been the chief shipbuilder of Wrexham. What a house he and Margaret were to live in! What a Christmas Will was to spend with them; and now Christmas and Will had come and found him thus!

His heart rose against fate with a fiercer passion than it had done for many and many a month. But Hector's was not a selfish heart, and in the midst of its own bitter anguish could feel a reluctance to damp the welcome of his old friend.

He smothered all his rising passion down as he best could, and holding out his hand again, said,—

“D—— the world, Will; let it say what it likes; but it tells a — lie if it says Hector Browne can't give an old shipmate the honest hand, ay, and a brewing o' grog, if he dies for it. Come, tumble in, old boy.”

Margaret concealed a sickness of heart even greater than Hector's, as she welcomed with a gentle kindness the rough demonstrative sailor, the sight of whom revived for her the misery of her wedding morning, and the deeper misery of the night when she hid from him and his drunken companions in the porch of the old school-house.

Will is gallant enough to shun any allusions to that day; or to offer any ill-timed congratulations as to the peace made between Margaret and her husband. He has heard both sides of the story in the town, and considers it wisest to hold his peace.

The Lovely Nancy sailed the day after the wedding, and, if Will may be believed, encountered, during the — rebellion, adventures of such a nature as to throw quite into the shade all the previous events of Will's life.

Assuredly Will's share in the punishment of the rebels has not improved his appearance, for a face so horribly scarred and discoloured Margaret has never before beheld. Down his lean, brown neck, from his chin to the middle of his bare chest, are five white seams, and all the explanation Will chooses to give concerning this war-trophy is that one of “they dark devils” flew at him for hanging her two sons.

Margaret finds it difficult to understand the mixture there is in Will of cruelty, and exultation in cruelty, and simple childish delight at being home again—a delight that shows itself through the most bloodshot and ferocious eyes, and quivers on the cruellest-looking mouth.

“There, ma'am,” says Will, throwing himself back in a theatrical attitude, with his left hand on his hip and his right extended to Margaret. “There's a hand I'm proud to offer you or any lady in the

land. There's a hand, ma'am, that's swung up more rebels than e'er a one in her Majesty's sarvice. You're the first woman on English ground that'll touch it since I come ashore."

"Don't be angry, Will," says Margaret, "if I say I prefer taking it only as the hand of Hector's cousin and friend."

Will drops the little fingers that have been placed in it, holds his hand out, still at arm's length, and, turning it about admiringly, says,—

"Take it as the defender of her Majesty's rights, ma'am, or let it alone."

"Best not oppose him, Margaret," says Hector, smiling; "he's not so black as he paints himself."

At this Will fires up; and, after a look of reproach at Hector, leans forward towards him and Margaret, with a diabolical gleam in his eyes, and mutters,—

"*Twenty-four before breakfast!* What d'ye think o' that? 'Twenty-four divils swung up before breakfast! Here, lay hold o' this cloth, and I'll show you how we managed 'em all at one pull."

"If ye do, Will, I show you the door!" says Hector, folding his arms, and coming between Will and Margaret, who was growing deadly pale. "Come, old chap, as a messmate and old friend, I give you a hearty welcome—as hearty as is in the power of an unlucky chap like me to give; but as to the hanging, let's forget it."

"Forget it!" raves Will. "Tell a soldier to forget his glory! A——"

"Come, come, mate, women don't like these things," says Hector, quietly.

"But it's what we might have expected on you, ye lubbers," growls Will, flinging himself in the chair Margaret has reached him. "It's what we might have expected after they noospapers. Here, when it was over, and we sitting like Patience on a monerment, waiting for news of advances, and promotions, and public rejoicings in Old England, here comes the papers; and it would draw tears to your eyes," declares Will, his own filling, "to see the poor chaps tearing 'em open, all of a tremble, expecting to find 'em full of our glory. Why, I take my oath, I saw before I opened mine, I saw as plain as a pikestaff, a big column headed with my name, and beginning, 'Her Majesty has been pleased to appoint Mr. William Holder, familiarly called by his messmates and officers, by whom he is highly respected—we may say honoured—Ranting Will, in consequence of his great services in the —— rebellion, and ceterer, and ceterer, and ceterer; when, instead o' that, I open the paper, and what do I see? Why the first words that catch my eye—I remember them now, —— them —'News has arrived of a nature to make every true Englishman blush for the conduct of his countrymen at ——.' Why, what's come to ye?" demands Will, fiercely, of Hector and his wife. "I'm not

ashamed to own I wept for you, ye lubbers. England, my country—my own, my native land—I wept for thee!”

“Why, man alive,” says Hector, stirring the fire to conceal a smile at Will’s vehemence, “what did you think had come to the old country, that we should be *glad* to hear of slaughtering poor darkies at this rate, and woman-flogging too?”

“Oh! as to that,” says Will, colouring through his scars, “you got false reports, there was no such thing; there was only one impident gal as ever we laid hands on.”

“And what did she do to deserve flogging?” asks Hector.

“What did she *do*?” roars Will; “why, give us her sarse for swinging her sweetheart and three brothers; *we* wasn’t going to stand her impidence at such a time, you don’t suppose; a sarsy hussy!”

“Come, come, Will,” says Hector, “it’s no pleasant business, and you can’t make one out of it, let alone what you call glory; so hold your tongue as to that, and let’s talk of pleasanter things.”

But Will had fallen into a gloomy reverie. Hector’s way of treating his triumphs has greatly disconcerted him. But he has it in his power to take a terrible vengeance on Hector. It is this he is meditating.

“You are quiet, Will,” says Margaret, after a long silence, during which Hector is laughing at Will behind his back.

“After a storm comes a calm, ma’am,” answers Will, sulkily.

But *before* a storm comes a dead calm sometimes, and such a calm is Will’s.

Suddenly he leans forwards, with a savage gleam in his eyes, and whispers something in Hector’s ear.

Hector is startled, pale, but incredulous.

“Come, Will,” says he, “we sailors have to do it sometimes to make a story go down a land lubber’s throat, but honour among—I mean truth among—marines.”

“Come out,” whispers Will, “I’m narvous at speaking before the gal—beg pardon—the missis. Come out.”

“Margaret,” says Hector, “we’ve no grog in the place; and a sailor’s welcome without grog is——”

“The ocean without salt,” poetically suggests Will, putting on his hat.

Margaret lets them out into the misty night, in which is set a heavy-reddish moon and a few stars with little cloaks of mist round them like the town lights.

She lets them out, and, returning to the fire, tries to forget Will and his horrors, Hector’s ill-luck, and all her own troubles in Elizabeth’s book.

She is but one-and-twenty, and romance is still very sweet to her, and Elizabeth’s romance to-night is enchanting.

On her knees before the fire, her book open on Hector’s chair, her rich brown hair pushed back from her square brows and shining in

the firelight, her young face smiling thankfully and joyfully over her prize, she reads, and forgets her solitude, her poverty, her coming motherhood.

Meanwhile the dreary voice of the sea is music to her, and has nothing of warning in it.

CHAPTER XV.

MARGARET AGAIN SEEKS SHELTER WITH ELIZABETH.

HECTOR did not return home that night.

The next morning, as Elizabeth Vandereck and her little ones sat at their breakfast, chattering as blithely as three linnets, the door opened and Margaret stood before them.

She threw herself down at Elizabeth's knees and pressed a letter into her hand.

It was written by Hector, and contained but these lines :—

“MY GOOD AND DEAR WIFE,

“I believe you have cared for me at least too much not to have seen how I have been living in hourly dread of something ever since I saw you that night at E. Vandereck's. Now Will shows me the blow I dreaded has fallen. I go—I *must* go to save you from something worse than anything we have endured together. I sail with Will at six to-morrow. I leave you to Him who alone knows when, or if ever, I may see your sweet face again. May that blessed woman Elizabeth have care of you, and—as she trusts to meet her Joshua at some future day—keep you and cherish you for me in case it should be that by some miracle I might be able to come back to you. I have no time for more. It's no use saying, Think well of me if Liz should be against me, so I pray you both—good dear souls—remember me with as much mercy and trust as you can. I shall cling to that hope.

“Your affectionate husband,

“HECTOR BROWNE.”

(*To be continued.*)

A POSTSCRIPT—*IN RE* DARWIN.

MANY things which I had intended to say in the notes on "Expression in Men and Animals," contained in the last number of *ST. PAULS*, but which were omitted, can wait for a more remote opportunity; but one or two should find an immediate place.

Mr. Darwin refers to Mr. Bain in one or two places (see page 8 of the INTRODUCTION), but he has evidently not read all of Mr. Bain's writing that bears upon his topic. I have been much surprised to notice how little attention the last edition of Mr. James Mill's "Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind" seems to have attracted. The foot-notes, by Mr. J. S. Mill, Mr. Bain, the late Mr. Grote, and others, are—look at them from what point of view you please—of the deepest interest; and many of those in the second volume bear closely upon Mr. Darwin's investigations. This I intended, but forgot, to notice in my desultory notes. A single instance will show what I mean.

Mr. Darwin, pages 38, 39: "I observed that though my infants started at sudden sounds when under a fortnight old, they certainly did not always wink their eyes, and I believe never did so. . . . [A] familiar instance of a reflex action is the involuntary closing of the eyelids when the surface of the eye is touched. A similar winking movement is caused when a blow is directed towards the face, but this is an habitual and not a strictly reflex action, as the stimulus is conveyed through the mind and not by the excitement of a peripheral nerve. The whole body and head are at the same time drawn suddenly backward. These latter movements, however, can be prevented, if the danger does not appear to the imagination imminent; but our reason telling us that there is no danger does not suffice. . . . I put my face close to the thick glass plate in front of a puff adder in the Zoological Gardens, with the firm determination of not starting back if the snake struck at me; but, as soon as the blow was struck, my resolution went for nothing, and I jumped a yard or two backward with astonishing rapidity."

Mr. Bain, Mill's "Analysis," foot-note, p. 338 vol. ii.: "The act of winking or wincing under the threat of a blow on the eye is a good example of strong and even indissoluble association. Anyone making the experiment with an infant will find that there is no original tendency to perform the act. It is an association generated under the impressiveness of an acute pain, mingled with terror; a state of things under which an indelible mental connexion will be

established in a very small number of repetitions. . . . The mere sight of anything in motion towards the face will induce the preventive volition."

The whole of what is said by Mr. Bain, and Mr. Mill following suit, on the Will, in their foot-notes, concerns Mr. Darwin. See also Mr. Bain's note about embracing, &c., &c., *op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 231 to 233, and compare what Herder, in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, says of the superior power of sounds (as compared with the sight of things) in stimulating certain feelings.

On these and a hundred other matters I make no comment, but I trust to be excused for troubling the reader with these additional memoranda; and for adding that in one line "bared head" should read "bowed head;" in another, "instructive" should be "instinctive;" and in another, "fairly laughed out of it" should be "partly laughed out of it."

I had also intended to brighten my dull pages by quoting, though it has no particular suggestive value, the profoundly ludicrous gestures substituted by Comte for the making of the sign of the Cross, &c., by the Roman Catholics. Instead of repeating Aves, Paters, &c., the true believer is to repeat the great positivist formula, "L'amour pour principe; l'ordre pour base; et le progrès pour but." But Comte was a phrenologist, and he goes on:—"Afin de mieux développer l'aptitude nécessaire de la formule positiviste à représenter toujours la condition humaine, il convient ordinairement de l'énoncer en touchant successivement les principaux organes que la théorie cérébrale assigne à ses trois éléments." When Comtism has overrun the world, and every one of us, in repeating the formula, makes the gesture of touching the proper "bumps"—then, supposing all record of this suggestion of the ceremony has perished, what may not some Darwin of the future have to say of its remote origin?

H. H.